

HE AND SHE

•
PAUL DE MUSSET

ornia
nal
y

Irene Owen Andrews

London

1920

Perlezi
Sept. 1943
S. D. A.

Mme Bessie Andrews
Regent Palace Hotel
London.

July - 1920

SHILLING NET EDITIONS

Bound in good Red Cloth
With Frontispieces by well-known Artists

-
- The Scarlet Pimpernel. BARONESS ORCZY.
I Will Repay. BARONESS ORCZY.
Seen and Unseen. E. KATHERINE BATES.
The Girl and the Gods. CHARLOTTE MANSFIELD.
The Degradation of Geoffrey Alwith. MORLEY ROBERTS.
From the Book Beautiful. GUY THORNE.
The Dupe. GERALD BISS.
Oscar Wilde : The Story of an Unhappy Friendship. R. H. SHERARD.
A Marriage in Burmah. Mrs. CHAN-TOON.
Portalone. C. RANGER GULL.
The White Rose Mystery. GERALD BISS.
The Emperor's Candlesticks. BARONESS ORCZY.
A Maid of Brittany. MAY WYNNE.
A Son of the People. BARONESS ORCZY.
Beau Brocade. BARONESS ORCZY.
Gentleman Garnet : Bushranger. H. B. VOGEL.
Mayfair. WINIFRED GRAHAM.
The Tangled Skein. BARONESS ORCZY.
When Terror Ruled. MAY WYNNE.
Henry of Navarre. MAY WYNNE.
The Silver Gate. C. FORESTIER-WALKER.
The Woman in the Case. C. RANGER GULL.
The Case of Miss Elliott. BARONESS ORCZY.
The Admirable Tinker. EDGAR JEPSON.
The Potentate. FRANCIS FORBES-ROBERTSON.
The Splendid Coward. HOUGHTON TOWNLEY.
Castles in Kensington. REGINALD TURNER.
The Popinjay. ALPHONSE DAUDET.
Lord Lisdor. EDGAR JEPSON.
Lady Lillian's Luck. COMTESSE DE BREMENT.
By the Gods Beloved. BARONESS ORCZY.
Sir Walter Raleigh. WM. DEVEREUX and STEPHEN LOVELL.
Jim Blackwood, Jockey. VICTOR MANDELSTAMN.
The Love Thirst of Elaine. S. J. A. FITZGERALD.
-

London: GREENING & CO., LTD.

THE LOTUS LIBRARY

Foolscap 8vo, top edge gilt, with bookmark:
done in both Cloth and Leather.

Several popular Classics are in preparation for this series.

- The Latin Quarter.** By HENRY MURGER.
Salammbô. By GUSTAVE FLAUBERT.
Thaïs. By ANATOLE FRANCE.
The Nabob. By ALPHONSE DAUDET.
Drink. By ZOLA.
Madame Bovary. By GUSTAVE FLAUBERT.
The Black Tulip. By ALEXANDRE DUMAS.
Sapho. By ALPHONSE DAUDET.
A Woman's Soul. By GUY DE MAUPASSANT.
When it was Dark. By GUY THORNE.
La Faustine. By EDMOND DE GONCOURT.
A Modern Man's Confession. By ALFRED DE MUSSET.
The Matapan Jewels. By FORTUNE DU BOISGOBEY.
Vathek. By WILLIAM BECKFORD.
Romance of a Harem. Translated from the French
by C. FORESTIER-WALKER.
Woman and Puppet. By PIERRE LOUYS.
The Blackmailers. By EMILE GABORIAU.
Adventures of Baron Munchausen. Intro-
duction by H. BLANCHAMP.
The Mummy's Romance. By THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.
The Blue Duchess. By PAUL BOURGET.
A Woman's Heart. By PAUL BOURGET.
A Good-Natured Fellow. By PAUL DE KOCK.
André Cornéllis. By PAUL BOURGET.
The Rival Actresses. By GEORGES OHNET.
Our Lady of Lies. By PAUL BOURGET.
Their Majesties the Kings. By JULES LEMAITRE.
In Deep Abyss. By GEORGES OHNET.
The Popinjay. By ALPHONSE DAUDET.
The Temptation of Saint Anthony. By G.
FLAUBERT.
Captain Fracasse. By THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.
He and She. By PAUL DE MUSSET.
A Passion of the South. By ALPHONSE DAUDET.

HE AND SHE

This English Edition of
“ LUI ET ELLE ”
BY PAUL DE MUSSET

has been faithfully translated from
the scarce French Text published by
Charpentier in 1868

HE AND SHE

By
PAUL DE MUSSET

Translated by
ERNEST TRISTAN
and
G. F. MONKSHOOD



LONDON
GREENING & CO., LTD.
1910

DEDICATED BY THE
TRANSLATORS
TO
PAUL VALROSE

This book has no need of explanation. The sole reason for its appearance is the accomplishment of a duty, one perfectly well understood by all honourable men. The Author will make no reply to the attacks of which he has been the object. His self-imposed reserve cannot be so easily broken as that. Invective, abusive and irresponsible threats against which the law offers every desirable protection, intimidate no one and prove nothing.

This is a note written by the Author.

HE AND SHE

CHAPTER I

TO M. JEAN CAZEAU.

No, my dear Jean, we are not as near hating you as you make out, and it was very wrong of you to sit up till three o'clock in the morning writing to me those six pages of reproaches which I do not deserve. No, you will never discover in my heart anything at all like hate. Drive right away those evil thoughts which grief and insomnia have instilled into your mind. Have patience, wait for a little while, and you will recognize that in me you have a loving sister and an affectionate mother. Good God! no, I am not closing my door to you; I am

not demanding your banishment. I do not sigh for the moment when every second as it passes will increase by a revolution of the wheels the distance which divides us. Can you assure me that you are cured? Is your heart, like mine, disposed to taste the charm of brotherly friendship? Is my presence without danger to you? Then come and see me, and stay with me as long as you please. But unfortunately you have not reached that state; your wound bleeds horribly. You talk to me of friendship with bitterness, and the anger of a love no longer reciprocated. You can see that we must separate.

What is the use of seeking an explanation, and the cause of my coolness? Love departs without any reason as it comes, or rather it dies, because everything has an end. Do you think a person discards it deliberately, like an unbecoming dress? You accuse me of

performing in my sentiments a real amputation with the ferocity of a surgeon. Alas! my dear child, would to God that my folly had lasted as long as yours! I regret it and weep for it; but it depended neither on you nor myself to prolong it even a minute. I awoke from it as from a delightful dream; but once awakened from one's sleep, nothing can renew the dream. Bear that well in mind. Vain tenderness would only harm you. The future belongs to holy friendship. Upon the page of love must be written the word: "Never!" Do not hesitate, start for Italy.

I smile as I see your masculine pride rebel when I call you my dear child. You forget that you were not twenty the day we first met. The ardour of your youth, the eagerness of your passion prevented you from realizing the chastity of my love and the maternal nature of my affection. I did not love you for

your youth, as those vulgar creatures who are the dupes of their senses would have done, but in spite of your youth. That should have preserved me from a weakness I to-day deplore, because our separation is its indispensable consequence. Instead of blaming me, remember that I surrendered to you to spare your sufferings. I recognize it too late! my devotion only served as the foundation-stone of your greater suffering. I am like a Sister of Mercy who would bring her patient to death's door in order to lavish upon him her attention; and in order not to complete your despair by unappreciated pity, I repeat: You must most certainly go away.

It only remains now for me to reply to your last accusation; many women in my place would never forgive you for it; but I cannot be angry with you because it seems to me so frivolous!

You apply to me the phrase of Saint Lambert about Jean-Jacques Rousseau : "He goes on accompanied by his mistress, Fame." My glory, you say, has come between us, my new lover is the public. I despise you because you are obscure, and I at a bound have become famous. Success intoxicates me. I am ashamed of having loved you ; I would like to be able to remove you from this world, after ruining your career, after robbing you of everything, happiness, repose, and even your name, for it seems you no longer call yourself Jean Cazeau.

There is only one little absurdity in all this ; it is that my glory does not exist. I do not seriously think of my fame, and I take no account of the success which the caprice of a foolish public has brought, among a thousand other ephemeral productions, to my "Chansons Créoles." I have by nature,

it is true, a talent for music. I learnt composition unaided, or almost unaided. My natural gifts and originality have, after a fashion, taken the place of the knowledge I lack of the fundamental rules of this beautiful art, of the solid education men receive, and without which even genius soars but with one wing.

Publishers ring my bell and ask in business tones when they can see me: but at the first bit of my handiwork which does not receive the applause of the idlers the sound of my bell will only notify the arrival of my friends.

My assumed name grows in fame every day. It will be forgotten more quickly still!

People ask one another: "Who is William Caze! a foreigner without a doubt." A well-informed person replies, a woman.—"A woman! ah! well, is she

young, pretty, gallant, married, a widow, or separated from her husband ? ”

All this gossip repeated by the slanderous, the envious and the curious, comprises what is known as fame, and yet you do not believe that I despise it !

My dear Jean, when in your presence is said, “ Do you know the name of her lover ? ” I beg of you to answer boldly : “ She has no lover, nor does she wish to have one.”

May the assurance I am giving you of it console you promptly ! but you must go away. It is your mother’s command, your sister’s prayer. You have taken your ticket for your departure this evening ; to once more forfeit your deposit would be a great pity. You have given me sufficient proof of love ; give me one proof of your courage. Let your next letter be dated from Lyons or Marseilles. Presently I will put on my man’s clothes to come and see you, to

help you make your preparations and press your hand.

OLYMPIA DE B.

The unhappy young man to whom this letter was addressed began by seeking in it for some word from the heart, some pale star of the old love, and finding none shed bitter tears. Like all discarded lovers, he had imagined that six pages of reproaches written during the night under the influence of a violent despair would be irresistible in their effect. For the twentieth time in a month this hope had been falsified. On reading it for the second time, he understood that the real object of this cold reply was to decide him to go away.

“She desires to be entirely rid of me,” he said, crumpling up the paper in his fingers. “My presence in the streets of Paris is becoming inconvenient to her. Her denials are entirely useless, for it is

obvious that I weary her in her new part as a famous woman. But what is the significance of this chaste love, this maternal affection which she has suddenly devised after three years? Ought I to be treated in such contemptuous fashion? Looking closely into our love affair, did she not throw herself at my head? Have I dreamed that we were lovers? No, my mother did not love me in that fashion. She is boldly trifling with my simplicity. Ah! she is right: I must go away and forget her. Still, it is kind of her to think of coming to press my hand for the last time; I will kiss her at the final moment before I go. I will press her to my heart."

Soothed by the thought of this embrace, the poor fellow did not look forward with as much horror to the moment of his final farewell. He opened his travelling bag hastily, and had already begun to pack, when the thought occurred

to him that Olympia's only reason for coming might be to make sure of his departure. At this idea great tears welled in his eyes. He dropped the clothes he had in his hand and sat down, with trailing arms, and chin upon his breast, in an attitude of profound melancholy.

At the moment he had parted from Madam de B., Jean, having had for three years no other home than that of his mistress, had bought a few indispensable articles of furniture in order to take up his residence in a two-roomed flat on the Quai de Gévres. A walnut-wood bed, a square table useful as a desk, an old red mahogany secretaire, very dirty, but of some value if it had been renovated, comprised, with four wicker chairs, his modest furniture. The fine view of the quais, Pont au Change, and the vast docks of the Seine would have made this flat into an agreeable retreat

for any one but a discarded lover ; but his despair and grief had made it more melancholy in poor Jean's eyes than the darkest dungeon. The clock of the Palais de Justice struck four just as a cab stopped at the door. The porter's face relaxed into a malicious smile as a little chap wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a frock-coat too big for him got out ; with his left hand in the pocket of his carefully-creased trousers, and swinging in his right a rush cane, he walked with a resolute air like a school-boy wearing his first pair of boots.

"The travelling bag is still empty ! I suspected as much," Olympia said as she put her hat and cane on the table. "You know very well that the coach to Lyons starts exactly on the stroke of six. What are you thinking about ?"

Jean shook his head as if to reply :

"I shall never be able to go !"

"What is the necessity," he said after

a moment's silence, "for you to send me three hundred leagues away? Can you not leave me in this corner?"

"To ruminate upon your own ennui!" Olympia retorted, "and perhaps fall ill! No, certainly I cannot permit it. This weakness is unbearable. I declare to you that if you remain, I will never for the rest of my life see you again, and I will burn your letters without reading them. Come—are you a man? Open that cupboard and hand me your linen: we will do the packing together."

Jean obeyed mechanically. He opened the cupboard and took out his clothes and linen, while Olympia arranged each garment in the bag with the dexterity of a person used to travelling. They were discussing the books he would need to take besides Artaria's *Guide to Italy*, while Jean fumbled in his drawer and took out a big packet of letters which he tried to slip unobserved into the bag; but

Olympia gently tapped him on the shoulder.

“What are you doing?” she asked. “I hope you will not be robbed by the brigands of Romagna, but still there are thieving innkeepers. Your luggage might get lost, and an amorous correspondence is not an object of the greatest necessity for travelling. On your return you shall read those letters again. Put them back in their place, my dear child. One day, when I have become your comrade, your brother William Caze, I shall prove that my heart does not disown what is written there; but only on condition that we talk of the former Olympia as of a person long since dead. Put back all that correspondence into your drawer, and be satisfied with taking away the key.”

When the letters had been put back, the packing being finished, Madam de B. looked at her watch.

“We have another quarter of an hour,” she said as she sat down upon the bag. “Listen to me, dear Jean: As you have the courage and desire to please me, I will take into account your obedience. I am not as hard and cruel as I seem. Now, at the moment you are going away, my heart is sad like yours; I regret the necessity of our separation for a few months, and now that the die is cast, I will not disguise my emotion. These little rooms, where you have suffered so, are very dear to me. I would like to come back to them during your absence, to think of you, to isolate myself, to work in peace far from all interruption, far from even my friends, for I shall have days of sadness, when the whole world will be odious to me. If you have no objection, tell your porter to hand me the key of your rooms, when I have a fancy to come and visit them.

Jean thought it was an admirable idea, and did not fail to enthusiastically adopt it. He saw in his friend's caprice pity, love and charming delicacy. In his effusive joy he fell on his knees before Olympia and kissed her hands as he thanked her for showing him such kindness and consideration. He promised to overcome the fatal love which prevented him from the enjoyment of so sweet a friendship. But as he spoke of his approaching cure too passionately, Madam de B. ordered him to calm himself unless he wished her to become pitiless once more. During this discussion the quarter of an hour had sped ; Olympia having taken care not to dismiss her carriage, thinking it might be useful, the luggage was taken out to it. Jean instructed the porter to hand over the keys to his friend William Caze when he asked for them, and the porter did not fail to reply that he was at Madam's

disposal ; then they started for the Rue Notre Dame des Victoires.

As they neared the General Post Office, from which the coach started, Jean appeared to shake off his dejection. The noise, movement and confusion of the departure seemed to make a fortunate diversion for his sad thoughts. The passengers were told to take their seats. His name was first on the list. With trembling hands and lips he approached Olympia to embrace her.

“Get up,” she told him quickly ; “the journey will be a long one ; you must not lose your place.”

“Yes,” Jean answered, “the journey will be a long one.”

He got on to the step, murmuring in an undertone :

“She refuses me a last kiss, a final good-bye ! She means me to take with me my last sigh. Ungrateful creature !”

But when he had taken his seat in the

coach, Jean saw a little hand tapping the closed window. He hastened to open it. The outstretched hand sought his own ; Olympia stood on tiptoe to make herself taller, and in this strained attitude she seemed so gracious and loving, that the reproach, which was still upon his lips, at once fled. While Jean listened with distracted ears to her commonplace recommendations as to the care he must take, precautions against cold nights and draughts, the clock struck, and the hand he held was withdrawn. He heard Olympia's good-bye mingled with sounds made by cracking whips, shouting postilions, and trotting horses.

When the rumbling of the heavy vehicle had died away in the distance among the other noises of the street, a young fellow whom no one had noticed because of his insignificant appearance and retiring ways raised his arms to the sky, crying: " So I am rid of him at last ! "

The following morning the same young fellow put in an appearance at Jean Cazeau's flat accompanied by a man in his shirt sleeves with black hands carrying a bunch of keys on a large ring. The porter had no hesitation in handing over the keys of the flat. The man with the black hands received the order to open the drawer, and while he tried to pick the lock the young fellow watched his movements with extreme interest. At last the lock yielded and the drawer was open. Olympia made a snatch at the letters.

"I have broken the lock," the man said; "shall I take it off and put it right?"

"It does not matter," was the reply, accompanied by a franc tip,— "it does not matter whether the drawer is locked or not."

The locksmith went away delighted at his tip. Hardly was he in the street

before Olympia also descended the stairs, and returned the keys of the flat to the porter. She had a parcel wrapped in a newspaper under her arm.

"Madam will see what care I take of the gentleman's flat. If anything were to happen, I would let Madam know if she would leave me her name and address."

"You don't know it, then?" Olympia asked.

"No, Madam."

"Very well, I will leave it for you on my next visit."

But the porter is still waiting for Olympia's next visit. She never returned to the Quai de Gévres.

CHAPTER II

ABOUT eight o'clock in the evening the frequenters of Madam de B.'s little drawing-room found her with the tongs in her hand stirring up a mass of paper which was burning in the grate. She was in one of those negligees ordinary women only wear before lunch-time, which consisted of an open dressing-gown of yellow silk with large sleeves, Turkish slippers, a Spanish hair-net, a man's shirt, and a black tie. Olympia's friends were not surprised at her curious costume, having seen her in many other strange attires. Besides, their attitude was dictated by that of the mistress of the house. Those faithful habitués, to the number of three, came every evening to display their friendship

for Madam de B. and their admiration for her lately discovered genius, by consuming large quantities of her grog, wine and beer. It was a way society people had of living without renouncing their tavern habits.

The oldest-dated friendship in Olympia's circle was that of a sort of wild rustic called Caliban, for everybody had a nickname in this Bohemian set. Caliban, having known Olympia in the country, had the privilege of intimacy with her, and sometimes told his friend the unpalatable truth. His nickname came from the fact that he arrived always either wet to the skin or covered with dust, according to the time of year.

The second was a learned man, a purist in literature, with narrow views concerning the fine arts, for he harped upon the most hackneyed rules. He had some reputation as a connoisseur even outside Madam de B.'s drawing-room,

but his cultivated mind inhabited an unkempt body, so dirty as to inconvenience his neighbours. He was a curious example of carelessness and cynicism, and for that reason was called Lord Diogenes. We must do Caliban the justice to say that he was not envious, and that he was thankful that Diogenes was dirtier than himself.

The third intimate friend was a young man of colossal stature, a skilled horseman without any mounts, a talentless painter, painfully ignorant, but an excellent and good-hearted fellow who would have traversed the whole of Paris to do his dear William, whom he loved as a comrade, a good turn. Strong as a guardsman, endowed with unusually powerful lungs, and gentle as a lamb, he often took Olympia to the theatre when she disguised herself as a man. His attire deserved the name of costume. There was in it something with a re-

semblance to a doublet, German lace, Cossack trousers, a Henry III cloak, a sombrero, and a shirt with a ruff. He was a sort of Francon Van Dyck. Besides, he was the best son in the world, noisy and blithe as a lark, and hardly ever opened his mouth without making a joke. He was called Hercules, Don Stentor, or Newfoundland. Other faces met at this whimsical court, but with less assiduity.

Caliban, who loved corners, was sitting on the floor between the open window and the curtain. Diogenes was making grog, very alcoholic in strength, while Newfoundland smoked a cigar as he sat astride a chair.

"William," said Diogenes, stirring with a spoon to make the sugar melt, "I want to talk to you. You know that Jean is my dearest and best friend. We all miss him, and I cannot help thinking you regret him yourself. His banish-

ment has lasted long enough : you must recall him."

"Bravo!" Hercules cried. "I support Diogenes ; I back him up."

"The time to recall Jean has not yet arrived," Olympia replied. "The reason for his exile concerns me : it is a question into which I can admit no other judgment than my own."

"The reason," Diogenes retorted, "is not a mystery to us, and if you want us to talk of it openly, I will prove to you that everybody is in favour of his recall."

"Speak openly, so that I can understand you."

"Ah well, when you love a man, the least you can leave him is a little friendliness."

"Good Diogenes," Olympia answered, "and you, my dear Stentor, is that what you think of me? Why did you not tell me so sooner? You know that I have never been Jean's mistress. I

treated him, it is true, with marked preference. You are all my children, and I looked upon him as my Benjamin, because his weak and gentle character caused him to be in constant need of love, care, and particular attention ; but, I call Heaven to witness, the caresses you took for love came from pure and chaste affection. You others are strong men, and you do not understand those plaintive souls who believe themselves forgotten or unfairly treated if they are put on the same footing as yourselves. I have been too generous, too sympathetic, to poor Jean. It is my only fault, and I am punished for it. My preference for him, although it only existed in appearance, aroused in his heart a deplorable love ; I have had to forbid him this house."

"What reply have you to make to that?" Newfoundland asked Diogenes.

"I answer that my arms would have

dropped with sheer astonishment had I not been holding this glass in my hand."

"Some days," Caliban interjected from his corner, "candles become such beautiful lanterns that William, in showing them to us, takes them himself in good faith for real lustres."

"I don't know what to think of it," Diogenes murmured as he emptied his glass.

"You must believe me," Olympia said in commanding tones.

"Yes," Newfoundland cried, "you must believe William. Bravo, William! I will dedicate to you a statue of marble from Paphos."

"At least call it Paros, animal!" Caliban cried.

"Paros if you like; it is all the same to me."

"With regard to poor Jean," Diogenes went on, "you think you know him, William, but you are greatly mistaken

concerning him. Because he is modest and good you have taken him for a man of ordinary attainments ; but he will one day greatly astonish you. Re-read his letters, and you will see that he has the style of a charming writer."

"His letters," Olympia retorted, pointing to the black ashes still smoking in the grate, "there they are, and those he will in future write to me will be dated from Rome. I have made him go to Italy, and he shall not return just yet."

At these words, Diogenes exclaimed against the barbarity of such a proceeding; Olympia defended herself, supported by Don Stentor's tremendous voice, and there was a great uproar in the drawing-room

"Instead of quarrelling," Caliban said, "let William give us a little music."

Olympia opened the piano and played a series of little pieces, still unpublished, which she had composed under the title

of "Scenes." They were melodies of exquisite freshness, containing little skill, but much art and a profound appreciation of rural nature. The three friends were in ecstasies ; Diogenes, who was an authority, predicted in good faith for this musical bouquet a great success, and this did not seem to displease its author. Caliban, who was lolling in his corner like a wild man, got up, and taking from his pocket a roll of paper :

"William," he said, "cast your eye over this little thing which your own publisher issued this morning : "The Suicide's Song," by Edouard de Falconey."

"What !" cried Diogenes, "Falconey has published a new work without me knowing it ! Play it for us at once ; we shall enjoy ourselves ; it will be romantic music without a doubt."

Before playing, Olympia glanced through the piece and read it in low

tones, as skilful musicians do, to be able to give a proper rendering of the difficult parts ; then she placed the paper upon the music-stand.

From the first bars of the introduction, the three listeners were struck by the character and grandeur in this strange music. Soon the song became more passionate ; the cries of bitter despair and the sobbing of a broken heart could be distinguished ; then at last came a sort of amorous melody, followed by a prayer which turned into a hymn of death. Caliban was depressed ; Diogenes held his head in his hands ; Newfoundland paced the drawing-room with lengthy strides in ever-increasing agitation.

“ Good God ! ” he cried, when the last notes of the piano had died away, “ how beautiful that is ! ”

“ He,” said Diogenes, “ is a great master, a real poet ; but this piece has

no resemblance to his earlier works. He transforms himself at each new work."

"Ah! yes," Caliban added, "you have talent, William—great talent in your own descriptive style; but that 'Suicide's Song,' my dear, is the work of a real genius."

"Who is Edouard de Falconey?" Olympia asked.

"A young spark," Diogenes replied, "a man about town, an aristocrat, with a tuft of hair on one side, his hat over his other ear, the figure of a wasp, a stupid air and high-heeled shoes; a man who disdains ordinary folk like ourselves, and is the darling of all the pretty women in Paris."

"A fop!" Caliban said—"that is a great pity."

"At college he was called the Prince with the Beautiful Hands; but with those hands he has written the piece you have just heard."

The door of the drawing-room opened, and the old servant brought in a letter.

"Is it right, Madam," she said, with a laugh, "that you are now Madam Case?"

"Yes," Olympia replied, "that is my pen and music name."

Madam de B. read the note, and as the bearer was waiting for an answer, she went to the ante-room to send a verbal message.

"Friends," she said on her return to the drawing-room, "to-morrow evening you shall have news of this great master coxcomb, the composer with the beautiful hands. My publisher, who is also his, is giving a dinner at the Rocher de Cancale, to which a few authors and famous musicians have been invited. The host tells me that I shall have the famous composer as my neighbour at dinner."

"You must go there as a man," Hercules said.

“I am not of that opinion,” Diogenes replied. “A youth would obtain very little notice, while a woman will receive the attentions of the whole of the company.”

“Take care what you say, my poor William,” Caliban said; “conversation at the dinner-table which requires a touch of lightness is not your forte. Your brain is as slow as Ludovic Currache’s, and his fellow-students called him the Ox. If a serious subject comes up for discussion and the question is probed at all, you may hope to ventilate some ingenious idea, to open up some luminous point of view; if not, O William, you will only shine by means of the charm, toilette and modesty of your sex.”

“Your words are perfectly true,” Olympia good-naturedly replied. “I will take great care, Caliban; I will try my best to do you credit.”

CHAPTER III

IN an old mansion in the Faubourg St. Germain consisting of several blocks of buildings Edouard de Falconey resided on the first floor. His flat, which adjoined a larger one occupied by his family, consisted of a bedroom and a drawing-room furnished as a study, ornamented with engravings and art treasures. His relations, who adored him, being sufficiently wealthy not to urge or thwart him in the choice of a career, he had reached his nineteenth year without having made up his mind to adopt any profession at all. His good looks, excellent manners, and his somewhat uncommon appearance made him a rather remarkable and very noticeable gentleman, especially to the women ; but

he had other and rarer advantages. He was the most liberally endowed man of this ardent and vivacious generation, and imported so much passion into everything he did, that a literary quarrel became as long and bloody a struggle as the siege of Troy.

Nature had endowed Edouard de Falconey with an amiable and easy-going character, which strange sorrows afterwards changed ; but if life is a blessing, never did child come into the world under more favourable auspices. After brilliant studies, he acquired through much reading and reflection a second education still more solid than the first. Being equally talented in all the Arts, he devoted his attention to painting and music, without looking upon them in any other sense than as a recreation.

For a summer his mother took a house in the country near Paris, and he often walked there. On these lonely walks,

to kill time, he composed ariettas, duets and fugues, which he wrote down when he reached the house. Sometimes he imitated the old Italian masters, sometimes the German ; one day he copied with great exactness the naïve style of Durante, or the more expressive manner of Pergolesi ; the next day it was the learned Bach, or the majestic Handel. At last the desire came to him to translate into melody his own sensations ; in this way Nature attracted him to a particular vocation.

One day Falconey played his compositions to a numerous audience. They were considered to possess keen and flippant charm, and more originality than he was aware of. Praises were lavished upon him, and the young folk called him a master. But he did not allow his head to be turned by this early encouragement.

“ I agree,” he said one evening to one of his most intimate friends—“ I

consent to become, for those who love me and are glad to applaud me, a genius in embryo. Let us enjoy my little new-born glory; I will turn my caprice into a muse. If the women think I am right, I am content to be, as a pastime, the hero of a circle, and we will enjoy the joke together. But suppose a serious man taps me on the shoulder and says to me: 'Young man, of what are you thinking?' I shall be embarrassed to give him an answer, for I do not know my own strength, and do not clearly see what I have within me. My life is as yet but a sort of pleasant dream. Let us embroider upon this spider's web, until we find out what I have in my brain."

"To find out what one has in oneself," Edouard's friend replied, "there is a simple way: offer a sample to the public. The next day one can judge and see clearly."

Falconey at last decided to publish a collection of Spanish melodies, containing serenades, boleros, tiranas, and even a few dramatic scenes. The sensation was so great that the author could no longer show himself in public without exciting noticeable comment. Ten letters a day from unknown correspondents brought more or less flattering evidence of admiration, interest and curiosity. At twenty he found himself full in the limelight in the fashionable world of Paris, adorned with a prestige no man of his age could dare to expect. Pleasure and the unexpected came to meet him, without his taking the trouble to seek them. He knew, and sometimes even disdained, intoxications which would have sufficed to turn many heads; but the fatuity with which men reproached him only existed in appearance, and his success did so little injury to his good sense and modesty, that his

genius developed day by day by the sole effect of time and experience. In the midst of a life of dissipation he produced a few compositions of the highest rank, among others the "Suicide's Song," which equally disconcerted the fanatics and the detractors of the Spanish fantasies.

In the same house with Edouard lived a young painter, a hard-working fellow of genial disposition, but of a serious turn of mind, who produced little pictures not entirely without merit, and was happier in his studio than anywhere else in the world. He was very sensible of intellectual delights, a good talker, and very discreet, thus possessing the requisite qualities to become a sure friend and confidant. The two young men had lived in close companionship for several years; after sharing their pleasures, a community of disappointments and sorrows had naturally been established.

Edouard had so much to tell his friend, so many adventures to relate, so much advice to ask, that he often forgot to listen in his turn to Pierre's confidences—the young painter's name was Pierre—and besides, when the latter had a secret he felt no desire to share it even with the comrade he loved as a brother. Falconey, who was excessive and exaggerated in all things, and was impressionable as a sensitive plant, looked to his friend for calm and judicious counsel. Their talks were often prolonged to the middle of the night, and sometimes Edouard took such pleasure in them, that he neglected suppers and balls on their account.

One evening Edouard was getting ready to visit a marquise in the neighbourhood, and was contemplating with satisfaction a new coat his tailor had just brought home. Pierre, lounging on a couch, was good-naturedly discussing the choice of a vest, when a servant

entered carrying a note, which Edouard handed to his friend after a careless glance at it.

“Read that,” he said to Pierre. “Shall I accept the invitation?”

“Why not?” Pierre replied. “You are so often in the company of great lords and ladies that you must be curious to have one dinner in the company of distinguished artists by the side of a clever woman.”

“Very well, say that I accept with pleasure,” Edouard told the servant.

Then he returned to his toilette and new coat.

“It would be good taste,” Pierre went on, “before going to this dinner at the Rocher de Cancale, to make a careful examination of ‘Chansons Créoles,’ so as to be able to talk to your neighbour with authority.”

Falconey opened his piano and played the first two numbers in the collection,

While admiring the beauty of the music and the vivid imagination of its author, he allowed himself, as a fellow-craftsman, a little criticism.

Every master has his method of grouping his melodies and arranging his harmony. That constitutes style. Falconey found in the first work of William Caze too laboured and pretentious an effort after effect. The composer, he said, had imitated those authors who abuse adjectives. Edouard took a pencil and corrected several passages, restoring to them a simple harmony. These alterations gave to the two pieces a simpler and more natural character, which also added to their poetic charm. He did not go beyond the first few pages ; but the music remained upon his desk for several days, and this trifling circumstance had grave consequences, as will soon appear.

CHAPTER IV

THE next night, at midnight, Edouard, who had finished the evening at the Opera, went up to his friend's room to give him an account of the æsthetic and musical dinner. Although he was the youngest present he had been the guest of honour, and had been complimented and treated with the greatest ceremony.

"What did you think of your neighbour at the dinner-table?" Pierre asked.

"Very beautiful," Edouard replied. "She is a woman after my own heart: a brunette, pale, with an olive complexion tinted in bronze, and enormous eyes like an Indian. I can never look at faces like hers without emotion. Her not very mobile features assume an air of pride and independence when at last she becomes animated in conversation.

Still, I confess that my first impression was not an agreeable one. A toilette which betokened a free woman, and particularly a tiny dagger hanging at her girdle, gave me a false idea of the lady's taste."

"A dagger!" Pierre cried. "Whatever for? As far as I know, there are no brigands at the Rocher de Cancale, as there are among the rocks in Terracina, and if people are fleeced there, at least it is done without violence. A woman who has so little virtue has no need of a dagger to protect it."

"So," Edouard went on, "when I playfully asked my neighbour the use of her trinket, she first of all blushed and then replied: 'I often travel, and sometimes dress as a man, and as I cannot allow any one to protect me, I must have the means of defending myself. This portable toy is always at my service, and makes a pleasing substitute for a

gentleman-in-waiting who would bore me.' ”

“ I am curious,” I added, “ to see how you use this nautical weapon in a case of boarding. To this she replied with perfect self-possession : ‘ It entirely rests with yourself to find out.’ ”

“ Dear friend,” Pierre said, “ this superb language and the dagger in her belt have great significance. It means : which one of you is bold enough to make war upon me ? This woman is well acquainted with the classic authors. But what did you say then ? ”

“ Having no intention of teasing my neighbour,” Edouard resumed, “ I made the remark that we both came from the same part of the country, since she had adopted the name of a great English poet, and mine was that of several kings of England. Afterwards, a treaty of peace was signed, and we talked amiably. From the disdainful and ironical

way in which she spoke of marriage, I gathered that she had a grievance against that institution. On the subject, in the most innocent fashion in the world, and with great assurance, she expressed a few ideas of a passable subversive philosophy and very doubtful accuracy. Then as the conversation became general, she seemed to listen with interest without uttering a word."

"And," Pierre asked, "were you brilliant? In the presence of a pretty woman the conversation becomes a tourney: did you break a good lance?"

"I said a few words, like the others."

"What were they? Don't pretend to me to be modest."

"Ah well," Edouard went on, "we spoke of the discoveries of Cuvier, who has just died, and of Humboldt's *Cosmos*. I ventured to say that we other poets and artists had no need of the knowledge that the earth turns

round the sun. That caused a protest ; I was pressed to explain myself, and I propounded this thesis : that the arts of poetry are only the business of the artist god, that they have no concern with the god of mathematics, and that if it suits me, I shall have no hesitation in making the sun turn round the earth. While my contradictors were all talking at the same time, my neighbour whispered in my ear : ‘ Take care, they will torture you for the heresy of the revolution of the sun, just as Galileo suffered for the opposite doctrine.’ I asked for a moment’s silence, announcing that my neighbour had something to say in my favour. Everybody took special care to hear all that William Caze had to say. The lady appeared embarrassed by the extreme attention paid to her. Still, she mastered her nervousness.”

“ I am,” she said, “ of the same opinion as M. de Falconey. What matter to us

the weight of a star, or if its attractive force is in the direct ratio to its volume, or in the inverse ratio to the square of the distance? All that concerns us is the glory, power, the marvellous beauty of the sun, and the sublime spectacles it gives us; is to see in it the father of light, of heat, of life, the source of happiness and of love. So I consider the distinction drawn by my young neighbour between the god of the poets and of the savants sufficient for my weak mind; and I will add, in support of his opinions, that the discoveries of Newton, Galileo and Humboldt can knock holes in Genesis without detracting one jot from the value of Haydn's 'Creation.' "

"Good gracious!" Pierre cried, "I don't know another woman capable of reasoning like that. I will forgive her the dagger at her waist-belt. But what answer did your opponents make?"

"They condemned us with one voice,

saying that our universe, with its vaulted firmament, and single sun made expressly for our grain of sand, was a little paltry thing. Their remarks made the blood rush to my ears, and as my neighbour was not anxious to argue, I was obliged to go on with the discussion myself."

"You forget," I said, "that my first words were, the sun shall turn round the earth if the hypothesis suits the ideas of the poet or musician; but if I adopt the Creator according to the science of to-day, still we shall not be of the same opinion: your universe will then appear paltry and insignificant to me. How tiny this earth is! you say; what a grain of sand for the sun to illuminate among so many suns! I answer: How small your universe is! What a grain of sand in space is this frail eddy of stars and suns, hurled into a corner of space, like a rag

sprinkled with gold! Who are you who believe you have a God for this imperceptible universe, the grandeur of which terrifies your thoughts?—you who have brought the purest of your mind and have kneaded it upon your miserable and imperfect mould to make it into a God resembling yourself? You have as laws good and evil, attraction and gravity; but in another corner of the boundless night, quite close, merely a few millions of leagues away, there also exists, beneath a few twinkling lamps, another little universe living under different laws. In that one there is neither good nor evil, weight nor force. The beings who inhabit it have different senses; they grasp what is around them by other means than your dim eyes and trembling hands. Here, below, everywhere, space is filled with wonderful combinations, different, all standing in the infinite, all having, like

yours, the material for an eternity or two's existence. Everything possible is done; every system of life combined with matter has been drawn from chaos, and yet, if the God who made them were to breathe upon them one morning, He would only have to look at nothingness to create a similar and still infinite number of new creations."

"I can see the diners," Pierre said, "applauding that tirade as if it were a piece of music, and the words 'an eternity or two' as if they were a well-constructed cadence or a brilliant arpeggio."

"Exactly," Edouard went on, "so much so, in fact, that I was embarrassed. Mine was an outburst after the style of Diderot, an occurrence so rare in me that I apologized for becoming more heated in the discussion than I cared to do. Fortunately, they seemed to believe me when I affirmed that these

declamatory sallies were not an everyday occurrence with me. We were at dessert, the host rose from the table, and I gave my arm to my neighbour to conduct her to the drawing-room, where coffee was served. During our passage from one room to the other, I noticed with astonishment that she was no longer wearing her dagger at her waist. She had without a doubt slipped it into her pocket."

"She had laid down her arms!" Pierre cried, "that was an emblematic way of awarding you the prize in the tourney. Women understand that language admirably. She had realized that ennui fled out of one door when you came in at the other. She desires to become acquainted with you."

"Then," Edouard resumed, "I picked up my hat to go to the Opera, where *Le Dieu et la Bayardère* was being played."

“How did you leave the lady?”

“I respectfully pressed the tip of a glove which she deigned to offer me. She invited me, in gracious and open fashion, to call upon her if I felt so disposed, and I promised to go and see her.”

“Take care, old friend,” Pierre said. “The woman is beautiful, seductive, and—what is more serious still—she pleases you; but as to her heart, you have not the faintest notion, and if it were bronze like her skin, or if she had none, the greater her intelligence, the more dangerous she would be.”

“Well, good-night!” Edouard said as he lit his candle.

While his friend was descending the stairs, humming as he went, Pierre, who had a good memory, faithfully transcribed upon a sheet of paper the details of the dinner at the Rocher de Cancale, and he did not forget, as you

may imagine, the tirade upon the universe and the god of science.

Olympia, who had returned home about nine o'clock, gave her friends a less exact and circumstantial account of the evening. Vainly Diogenes pressed her with questions ; she replied in monosyllables. When they asked what she thought of Falconey, and if he had made great efforts to please her :

“ I think neither good nor ill of him,” she replied. “ He is a very clever man ; but if he made advances to me I did not notice them. We agreed about nothing. He made a very long speech about I hardly know what, Humboldt's *Cosmos*, I think it was. The dinner, too, was very good ! ”

“ These, then, are the details you promised us ? My dear William, at this moment you are like those novelists who pompously announce to the reader

that the hero of their story is very clever, and yet do not know what words to put into his mouth."

"Perhaps it is," Olympia retorted, "because I take so little account of the hero in question, and I am thinking of something else."

"Speak low, gentlemen," Caliban went on, "William is a dreamer. William has something dark in his soul, or else some thought keeps running in his vast head like a rat in a barn. Must we withdraw, William?"

"As you please," the lady replied. "Go or stay; it is all one to me."

Olympia picked up a piece of music paper and began to write at a corner of the table, between the bottle of beer and the sugar-basin, to an accompaniment of the clink of glasses and conversation, as tranquilly as if she were alone. This power of concentration was one of her most remarkable faculties. Her friends

were not the people to become annoyed without good reason. They went on talking and drinking. But at the end of an hour, as their friend appeared to become more and more isolated, they departed together.

"What is the matter with her?" Hercules asked.

"Friends," Caliban replied, "I have known her intimately from a child. There will soon be a fresh development."

CHAPTER V

A FEW days later, Falconey paid his first visit to Olympia. He found her in one of those picturesque negligees which suited her so well. Her reception of him was cordial, her tone natural, and gay without pretentiousness, as she offered her visitor excellent Egyptian tobacco and sat down upon a cushion to smoke a long pipe of Bosnia cherry. In order to profit by the advantages of the fine opportunity which this agreeable unconstraint of the artistic life presented, Edouard pretended to look with keen interest at the lady's Turkish slippers. He admired their shape and embroidery, dropped upon one knee to look at them more closely, and gently rested his finger upon the end of the foot to indicate what seemed

to him really Oriental in the pattern of the embroidery.

Olympia, not daring to withdraw her foot for fear of displaying unseasonable prudery, lent herself with a good grace to Edouard's fancy, and told him, with a smile, that she was very glad to counteract with her slippers the bad effect of her dagger. They remained in that attitude for a very brief moment, during which the most careful scrutiny would have failed to discover anything but childish curiosity on the one side, and on the other amiable simplicity, without a shadow of coquettishness; yet both realized that they pleased one another, and that their hearts were made to beat in unison. It was all in vain that they talked of insignificant matters, eyes, voice, gesture, all confirmed this sudden revelation. Even the arrival of Diogenes and Caliban, who interrupted the tête-à-tête, had not the power to suspend this

tacit exchange of thoughts and sentiments. At the end of a quarter of an hour, they knew that since their first meeting they had dreamed of one another, and might in the future love, separate, and perhaps deceive one another, but they would never become indifferent.

Caliban and Diogenes, from the time of their entrance, took pleasure in displaying how far their immunities and privileges extended. The first took care to talk familiarly to his friend and seated himself, like her, in Turkish fashion; the other one reclined at full length upon the couch. Olympia, feeling that the bad manners of her friends might do her harm, soon rose from her cushion and seated herself in an easy-chair.

Falconey gave no indication that he noticed the uncommon attitudes of the two Bohemians, and displayed his gentlemanly ways by affecting a respectful courtesy, for which Olympia thanked

him with a glance. Diogenes noticed it, and in revenge launched a few cutting pleasantries at the grand folk of the Faubourg St. Germain, their old-fashioned ways, out-of-date ideas, and their retrospective politics. Edouard, brought up in that set, loved and respected it. He did not believe himself obliged to renounce his friends because he had acquired talents and reputation.

“The set you are attacking,” he said to Diogenes, “forms a considerable section of Paris society, and not the least amiable part. I have the honour to belong to it, and beg your pardon on its behalf. If you do not consider it consistent with the century in which it exists, it is so with its principles and traditions. It has preserved the beautiful, brave, and the honourable. When one examines it closely, it is astonishing to see what natural goodness, severe probity, and unsullied honour can still make of a

gallant man in the century in which we live. I often meet in this company people whom I recognize as having brave hearts and noble and generous souls, and I cannot mention anything they lack when they have, as well, a cultured mind and great politeness."

"And a decent appearance," Olympia added.

"Is that meant for me?" Diogenes asked.

"For you, and to you."

"Very well ; I understand : you do not consider me well-bred enough for your drawing-room. You want to have a new house and sweep away your old friends. Your desire shall be satisfied. If you wish to see me again, you know where I live : write to me."

"I am not inconsolable," Olympia replied ; "you will come back without being recalled."

Diogenes went out without saying

good-bye to either the mistress of the house or the visitor. As soon as the door closed, Caliban got up, ran and fell upon his knees before Olympia.

“Kind William,” he said, clasping his hands, “do not send me away, I entreat you. I too am a savage, a churl, but if you turn me out, I shall go away into the woods to die like a lost animal. Forgive me, I will not again crouch in corners ; I will be more thoughtful, sit up straight upon my chair and twiddle my thumbs like Thomas Diafoirus. I will buy a real longcloth black coat, I will put on a white tie, and a yellow chamois vest ; I will play the gentleman, and look like the picture of Sir Robert Peel.”

As he jested, poor Caliban had tears in his eyes.

“Yes, my old friend,” Olympia answered, “you shall stay with me. Not only will I not banish you, but I will

allow you to crouch behind my curtains and launch your customary gibes ; I will never be angry with you, because I know you love me and would jump into the fire for me.

“ Monsieur de Falconey,” Olympia added, “allow me to present to you Caliban, the best and most badly brought-up of men. Take time to become acquainted with him, and you will see that he will win your heart.”

Caliban cut a sort of caper.

“ God be praised,” he said, “ I escape the revolution ! I resume possession of my corner, and I would not exchange it for a seat in the Chamber of Deputies.”

Pierre put down his palette and brushes when Edouard came to tell him the details of this first visit. He appeared to be listening with the closest attention, watching the speaker's face, studying the inflections of his voice, and when the story had finished, he said :

“Old friend, all these little circumstances tell me nothing of what went on in your heart ; I must know if, when you were so imprudent as to rest your finger upon the lady’s slipper, any terrible shock emerged from that slipper as from a Leyden jar.”

“I will not deny,” Edouard replied, “that I believed I felt an electric shock rise from the slipper to the end of my finger and thence spread throughout my body ; but I betrayed on my face no signs of it.”

“What does the face matter ?” Pierre went on. “At the rate you two are progressing, you will be lovers in a fortnight, if you do not already love one another. There is danger in it. This woman is mysterious and complex ; sometimes she is kind, familiar and generous, while at other times she is unfeeling, proud and susceptible. Less than a month ago she loved a charming

fellow named Jean Cazeau. How is it he is no longer seen at her house? I will find out the cause of their parting. I know friends of Jean Cazeau; I will ask them; I will let some daylight in upon this woman's life. Only promise me not to fall in love with her before this evening."

As he spoke, Pierre dressed, took his hat, turned his friend out and shut the door of his studio. He spent the whole day in going from one to the other, collecting even the most trifling information about Olympia's character and antecedents, as if a matrimonial venture was in the air. His inquiries took him to the Quai de Gévres, where he went to satisfy himself that Jean Cazeau had really left for Italy. The porter hastened to tell him of the curious expedition of the forced drawer. As he was afraid of being suspected of robbery, he insisted upon showing a witness the traces of the

forcing of the lock. From the information he had collected, Pierre came to the conclusion that William Caze was an excellent companion, a good friend, with pleasant ways, and capable of devotion, but that Olympia was a dangerous woman, in whose presence a reasonable man ought to hold his heart in both hands. When he had narrated to Edouard the sad ending of Jean Cazeau's love affair :

“Old friend,” he said, “do you remember, on the trip to Havre we took together, the dangerous passage across the bar of Quillebreuf, where the black flags flying from the masts of sunken ships were visible above the waves? In this woman's life there is also a black flag. I have shown it to you. The reef is marked—now do as you please.”

“Dear fellow,” Edouard replied, the Emperor Charles V, who knew men thoroughly, said : ‘When men give

themselves to one as good and loyal subjects, one must believe them, or at least act as if they were, and force them to become good and loyal subjects if they are not. A beautiful, amiable and intelligent woman comes to me with a smile, a pleased expression and outstretched hand, should I suppose her to be false, dangerous and treacherous! And that upon the evidence of ill-treated lovers, jealous friends and envious folk! Fie! even if she has been cruel and treacherous to others, to me alone she will be good, sincere and noble, because I believe her to be so. The evil one seeks and suspects rises out of the earth; that which one does not see and upon which one treads does not exist.

"That is what I feared," Pierre murmured: "it is all of no avail because this woman has a bronze-coloured skin."

But Pierre was mistaken. It was not

only by the eyes that Falconey allowed himself to be captivated ; the charm which attracted him to Olympia sprang from a deep and hidden source. Precisely because men of genius have received the cruel gift of feeling more keenly than others and of expressing their sentiments in a language the vulgar do not speak, and nature inspires in them a need for experiences and suffering, a marvellous instinct makes them distinguish at first sight the beings from whom they can hope for great joys and great griefs. A fatal and irresistible penchant lures them on ; the more obvious the danger, the more boldly they seek it, and the more easily does their heart surrender to one who may rend it. They hasten, like the early Christians, to the stake ; they come back wounded, but grander, and these terrible shocks make their unhappiness and glory.

CHAPTER VI

THE week did not pass before Falconey paid another visit to the Rue Mazarine, where Olympia lived. He did not mention the second visit to his friend. Pierre did not seem to notice this uncommon reserve on his part. He was not the man to volunteer advice which was not desired ; but as he talked of something else :

“ Look upon my desk,” Edouard said to him, “and you will see there a partly written letter : be good enough to read it, for I want to know whether it is common-sense.”

Pierre read as follows : “ I beg you to believe, Madam, that I know my world. I know that it would be a fault, if not an impertinence, for a man to write to a Parisian lady to tell her he loved her

without first of all preparing the way by a few vases and a fair deluge of nonsense. The heart of a pretty Parisienne is not like a green cloth upon which one throws a coin, calling out "red" or "black," as the case may be. It is a fashionable table, where one must examine one's cards, look over one's neighbour's shoulder, and keep the ace in one's sleeve ; even then one does not always win. But you are not a Parisienne, and I ask myself whether a woman like you has days and hours when she is willing to listen without anger to the expression of a true sentiment, and whether it is not better to take her into one's confidence directly the sentiment is conceived."

"You can complete the billet-doux and dispatch it," said Pierre ; "I see nothing out of place in it. The answer will be : 'Child that you are ! I am eight years older than you !' You will

be offered the chaste sympathy and holy friendship of the song—till the day she will consent, out of charity and pure goodness of soul, to become your mistress to prevent you from suffering ; so that love will appear ornamented with all the charms of a medicine or a hygienic course.”

Pierre was again mistaken : Olympia replied in frank and natural terms : “ You are quite right, sir,” she wrote, “ not to treat me as a Parisienne ; but since you admit that in acting as you have done, you would have committed a serious indiscretion if I had been a member of that aristocratic circle in which you live, I am asking myself how another woman would answer you. Apparently she would get angry and close her door to you. I esteem myself fortunate in not being forced to take rigorous measures which would nip our friendly relations in the bud. I should

be as severely punished as you. But alas! where will the subject you approach in your letter lead us? Have you nothing else to tell me? How grateful I should be to you if you came to see me and did not mention that subject. I dare hardly hope that in your aristocratic circles such grace and generosity can exist. This thought mingles a little sadness in the sincere compliments that are sent you by your colleague

“WILLIAM.”

Falconey, touched to the heart by this loyal answer, at once betook himself to Olympia's residence quite determined to suspend the declaration of love he had commenced. He did not desire an appeal in such good taste to fail; a visit of simple politeness, sandwiched like a parenthesis between two gallant phrases, seemed to him a new and amusing affair. He swore upon his honour that he would

not utter a word of love unless the lady desired to speak of it and first introduced the subject. Pierre approved strongly of this course of action. He went up into his studio to quietly await his friend's return.

As Edouard had not returned at nightfall, Pierre supposed that he had stayed to dinner. He waited till midnight. He might have waited for a week, as his friend did not put in an appearance during the whole of the week ; but the next morning he received an express letter, written upon common paper, which he preserved with great care, with the following contents :

“ I have kept my promise, dear Pierre : I did not mention love. One thing we failed to remember, that love is expressed in a hundred ways and mocks at formulæ and sounds. What is the use of words, how little it matters what the lips utter when one hears hearts beat ! What

infinite sweetness there is in the first glances of the woman who attracts you ! At first it seems that everything spoken in one another's presence is like a timid essay, a slight test ; soon a strange sentiment of joy arises ; the feeling comes that an echo has been awakened ; the animation of a double life appears ; what touch ! what approach ! and when love is certain, when the long-sought fraternal spirit has been recognized in the beloved creature, what peace of soul comes ! Speech dies a natural death ; beforehand you know what is going to be said ; hearts listen, while the lips are silent. What a silence ! What perfect oblivion ! In that way I kept my promise of being silent. There is no need to be angry, dear Pierre ; I loved her before I started. I am happy—forgive me."

The third day, another letter in quite a different style invited Pierre to spend the evening in the Rue Mazarine :

“Your presence,” his friend told him, “appears to me absolutely necessary at the festivities we are having to celebrate your first entrance into William’s violet drawing-room. If you did not come the function would hardly attain its real object, and as the number of the guests increases by one, my ‘little bird’ declares she will put the supper under lock and key.”

At the foot of the page was this postscript in a different hand to the note : “The ‘little bird’ warns Pierre that, the door being shut to visitors, he will have to give his name to Justine the cerberus.”

“Well !” Pierre said, “my rôle as adviser is done ; I do not propose to wait to be implored to accept a more diverting part.”

In the evening, he found the violet drawing-room illuminated in brilliant fashion. Edouard, standing by the fireplace, was dressed as a marquis of the

eighteenth century, with short breeches, white silk stockings, shoes with golden buckles, and a powdered wig. Olympia, in a double skirt and robe set off by clusters of ribbons, her face adorned with beauty spots, and her natural hair powdered white, stood in the middle of the drawing-room to receive her distinguished visitor; she recited to him a burlesque compliment she had learned by heart.

The ice was soon broken. Pierre, for whom a costume of the same period as the other two had been prepared, hastened to dress in Edouard's room, and returned as much inclined for laughter as his hosts. Admitted into the intimate society of the Prince Ireneus and Princess Edwige, he felt the necessity of assuming the title and name of Councillor Gerondif de Pimperlle. The evening was one long round of pleasantries, such as comic scenes and

discussions, in which each person took his character with a conscientiousness that imparted real gaiety to it. More than one serious man would have taken great pleasure in listening to this chatter, and in a short time perhaps the intoxication of laughter and foolishness would have attacked him too.

Pierre did honour to the supper, paid his score in sallies and returned home at dawn completely subjugated by the grace, the cordial familiarity, the amiable bearing and good-fellowship of his hostess. The next day, sitting in front of his easel, he laughed again at the recollection of that charming evening, and asked himself how he could suspect of falsity and duplicity a person who gave such evidence of a noble heart. Pierre promised himself that he would repair that injustice by becoming the defender of the woman he had attacked. The next few days he spent the evenings

with his friends, and the conversations, sometimes gay and sometimes serious, which he had with Olympia completed his conquest.

"Edouard was right," he told himself; "even were this woman cruel and treacherous to the others, she will be good and loyal to him."

CHAPTER VII

IN spite of the discretion of all parties, it was soon discovered that Edouard and Olympia were spending their time together. The frequenters of the house, finding the door always closed to them, and in this way being deprived of their daily refreshments, murmured amongst themselves. Old Justine allowed the secret of the innovations in her mistress's life to be dragged from her. The misfortune of artists of genius is their inability to ever withdraw from general observation. Their tiniest actions are scrutinized and commented upon, and they are made to pay dearly for the advantages of fame, by having everything to their detriment zealously published. In a moment everybody was gossiping

about Falconey's week's visit to William Caze. Pierre believed it his duty to warn his friends. They began by laughing at the gossip, and then, to escape it, gleefully formed a plan of taking refuge in the country. As they wanted woods and water, the little town of Moret, situated near the banks of the Loigny at the edge of a forest, appeared to them worthy of preference. They arranged to part for two days only and meet upon the third on the steamer at Montereau.

During the time of the separation, the house of William Caze was reopened to the imbibers of beer; but silence and yawns told them in unmistakable fashion that the thoughts of their friend were very far away from their Bohemian company. At last, on the second day, Olympia, unable to contain herself any longer, rang at Edouard's door. She found him packing, with Pierre's assistance. They all three remained talking together till

six o'clock ; and as they had a fancy to go and dine at a restaurant, Edouard went into his bedroom to dress, while Pierre went up to his room to get his hat. Olympia, left by herself in the study, noticed upon the desk the music of the "Chansons Créoles" open at the first page. She put the music upon the piano and began to play the first two pieces, including the alterations made by Falconey. The window was open. Pierre heard in the distance the music, and recognized at the same time Olympia's touch and Edouard's corrections. He experienced a feeling of surprise and fear. Falconey, on his part, remained for a moment stupefied, searching his brain for an excuse to make the author for this act which constituted the most cutting criticism of her work ; and as he could not discover one :

"Bah !" he said to himself, "surely a few altered harmonies more or less will

not have the power of separating two faithful lovers."

When he returned to the drawing-room to interrupt the music, Olympia asked his permission to finish her reading of the two corrected pieces.

"This version is better than mine," she said; "you have done a good work, and one which will be very useful to me. You shall see in my other music the profit I shall derive from this lesson."

Several times in the course of the evening Olympia became wrapped in her thoughts, from which she emerged with the phrase :

"Those corrections were excellent. The hand of the master was recognizable in them."

Although there was not the slightest shade of ill-humour or spite visible in her reflections, Pierre was convinced that the self-respect of William Caze had that day received a deep wound.

The lovers found at Moret a real nest, which seemed as if it had been made for them. Their cottage was but twenty minutes' walk from the forest. With the assistance of two old gendarmes' mounts which they hired, they traversed the forest night and day.

The beautiful site of the Malmontagne, so well known to artists, was Edouard's favourite spot, because of its groups of rocks which assumed such fantastic shapes in the moonlight. The two nocturnal ramblers returned there time after time. Like the hero of Cervantes and his faithful squire, they left their quiet steeds grazing for hours at a time, while they climbed upon the back of blocks of sandstone which looked like slumbering elephants, or else they seated themselves side by side and allowed their fancy to run riot; but when they began to talk of themselves, of their plans, of their love and their happiness, they

became so oblivious of the time that sometimes the morning surprised them.

During these long talks, in this most beautiful of solitudes, Olympia listened to a language no other woman will ever hear. The heart which opened to her during those warm September nights contained such treasures of love and passion, it spoke so lofty and poetic a language, and supported as it was by the most brilliant and active of imaginations in all the freshness of youth, this heart of twenty-two was so full, so amorous, so eloquent, that one asks oneself how the creature who has seen its depths, has received its richness, shared its emotions, and counted its beats, has not only been able to lose the memory of those moments of happiness, but also deny them, wither and soil them by atrocious lies, by representing that period of her life as a time of rough experiences, and the noblest of loves as a bitter cup.

Our lovers planned to spend a week at Moret : they remained there more than a fortnight without the shadow of a cloud or the semblance of a quarrel rising between them, without a second's ennui or lassitude at being together. Not the tiniest wrinkle formed in the rose leaves of which love, confidence and security made them a bed softer than that of the most voluptuous of sybarites. The equinoctial gales, the rain and the early frosts were the only things able to make them move. The forest did not shelter them as well in bad weather as it did from the heat of the sun ; their little house, not altogether watertight, diverted their thoughts in the direction of Paris and the violet drawing-room. They had gone away to avoid the indiscreet and curious : they returned with the intention of finding new friends and creating an agreeable circle for the winter.

Olympia wished to give a dinner to her publisher and several of the other guests at the Rocher de Cancale. Edouard drew up a list of the guests. The three ordinary frequenters of the house were excluded from the list, and that caused a great deal of murmuring amongst them. The other guests were too intelligent folk not to perceive the relations which existed between Olympia and Falconey. They did not consider themselves bound to keep the secret, so that their remarks assumed the proportions of complete publicity. Olympia desired this: she wished to have the universe as the confidant and spectator of her love affairs henceforth associated with her artistic glory; she wished to make it impossible for the man she loved, as well as herself, ever to bring the liaison to a vulgar and shameful end. She desired her love to come under the jurisdiction of the world and

of posterity. She was burning her boats.

Pierre considered this mad conduct ; but he was glad to pay homage to the woman's character even though she extended her sincerity to the lengths of imprudence. In a short time the circle of the violet drawing-room was renewed. Don Stentor bored Edouard ; he was coldly received, and he withdrew without regret from a house where style had become too precious and bombastic for his liking. Diogenes, who did not profit by lessons in good manners, out of sheer bravado gave himself more and more familiar airs, thinking they would not have the audacity to close the door in his face. After Falconey, at Olympia's request, had given him to understand that he was unbearable, he beat a retreat and never forgave either of them.

Caliban was the only one left, because

his rustic cleverness and plain speaking gained him Edouard's friendship. A few men of talent and intelligence advantageously replaced the original habitués; but hardly were these measures taken to pass the winter pleasantly, when they began to regret solitude, the country and the great woods. During the long autumn evenings, Edouard amused himself by making pen and ink sketches of the various incidents, the moonlight adventures and the comic scenes of the excursion to Moret. Each drawing was accompanied by a burlesque legend. In the midst of these diverting memories, Olympia sometimes sighed as she thought of her beloved forest; Edouard, for his part, still dreamed of their tête-à-tête. One evening Italy was mentioned.

"Suppose we go there?" Falconey said. "The sun has deserted us, let us run after him. Are we not free? What

is there to prevent us from following the swallows' example?"

"We will go where you please," Olympia answered. "I am ready to start."

"Go, friends," Pierre added; "you seem to me to be very happy here; but if you would be happier elsewhere, go; do not hesitate."

"The idea is absurd," Caliban cried, emerging from his den. "Everybody in Paris is talking about you already. Do you wish to join the ranks of the underworld? Besides, what will you do if you discover, when you are four hundred miles away, that you are tired of one another?"

"That would be too terrible a misfortune," Edouard said, "to be foreseen from such a distance."

"As far as I am concerned," Olympia added, "I point-blank refuse to admit its possibility."

"Very well!—go to the devil," Caliban

went on. "I will go back to the country. There I will await you, William. There you will soon rejoin me with drooping ears, limping like the pigeon in the fable, dragging your feet, and bearing in your heart the point of a stiletto, while Edouard will return home no less crippled than yourself. Happiness is not made for wandering spirits. I give you both my malediction."

Departure once decided upon, in spite of Caliban's opposition, the lovers bore more patiently the fogs and the cold. The evenings were spent in discussing the route. One day they wished to cross the Alps, another day they felt more disposed to go by the shores of the Mediterranean. Should they pass the winter at Florence or Naples? Would they not be better at Sorrento, or in some other village on that far-famed bay?

A month passed in discussion of this

kind, and Caliban began to hope that the trip would end in words by the fire-side. But one evening Edouard came in with a piece of paper in his hand, which he presented in mysterious fashion to Olympia, and then sat down facing her to watch her closely while she read the writing on it. It was the ticket for two seats booked on the mail-coach to Lyons for the Thursday of the following week.

"I booked them conditionally," Edouard said, "and I have till to-morrow to give them up or postpone the day of starting."

"There is no need to give them up or change the day," Olympia cried, clapping her hands. "I thought you were undecided; but since you have at last made up your mind, I will go as bravely as you."

"I trembled," Edouard went on, "lest on reading the ticket a frown should show me that I had been too hasty; but

I see by your face that we can still go a very long way together."

"To China, if your heart so willed it," Olympia answered.

On the following Thursday, in the darkness, Pierre waited a quarter of an hour for his friends in the courtyard of the General Post Office before he saw them alight from a cab. They all three entered a low hall, where a few people wrapped in their cloaks were grouped in silence around a stove. Soon the clock struck six, and everybody made a move. The departure of the mail-coaches began ; they emerged one by one from the inner courtyard, sometimes at long intervals. A man shouted out their destination at the top of his voice. Pierre, whose heart contracted a little in the midst of these people, a prey to the fever of the departure, began mechanically to count the vehicles. The Lyons coach was the thirteenth. He

mentioned the fact in an undertone to Falconey, who replied, with a laugh :

“ If there was no number thirteen, we could not get to fourteen, and often that would be a pity.”

The official called for the travellers for Lyons. Pierre embraced his friend and pressed Olympia's hand. The two lovers leapt gaily into the coach, and the horses started ; they were four Percheron entire horses of great strength. One of them replied to a cut of the whip from the postilion by a kick, and cannoning into his neighbour, gave the whole of the concern a jolt to the left. Before this blunder had been corrected, the coach passed through the gateway and one of the wheels violently struck the post.

“ Another bad omen ! ” Pierre cried ; “ but it will be the last.”

He retraced his steps to the Faubourg St. Germain. At the end of the Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau he heard a great

uproar ; in the midst of a crowd where twenty people were shouting at once he saw a mail-coach which had caught the barrel of a water-carrier and knocked over the man drawing it. A horse had got his legs entangled in the traces. Pierre drew near and saw his friend's head at the window.

"We are not superstitious," Edouard said.

"But what does your fellow-traveller think of it?" asked Pierre.

"The 'little bird' is laughing heartily."

The water-carrier when picked up found himself safe and sound. The fractious Percheron, disentangled from the traces, received another cut from the whip ; a shower of sparks flew from the stones, and the coach went off at a gallop to make up its lost time.

"How foolish I am to be so nervous!" Pierre said. "The happy travellers are those love takes very fast."

CHAPTER VIII

ON reaching Lyons, Edouard and Olympia rested for two days ; they afterwards descended the Rhone in a steamer, where they met a clever man who was a friend of theirs going to take a consul's post in Italy. This pleasant companion accompanied them as far as Genoa, where he left them to take up his duties. Genoa pleased the two lovers exceedingly. They visited its magnificent palaces in the morning ; at midday they went to the public promenade to gaze upon the panorama of the city and the spectacle of the open sea ; in the evening they went to the Carlo-Felice theatre ; sometimes they hired a carriage and traversed the suburbs, where the hospitable villas always had their gates open to curious strangers. Edouard

found so much charm in this active life, his days were so full, one plan carried out gave birth to so many others, that the result to the two travellers soon was an accumulation of fatigue which they noticed a little later. One day when the sun was shining gloriously, they were sitting on the edge of a fountain beneath the trees of a famous villa, when Edouard, as he moistened his forehead and temples with the water from the fountain, suddenly said :

“ My head must be very bad for the cold water to give me so much relief.”

In fact he noticed that the blood was throbbing violently in his arteries, that his chest was oppressed and his limbs worn out, as if he were at the beginning of an illness.

“ Do not be angry, Dame Nature,” he said ; “ do not grumble so loudly because you have been overworked ; I will pay heed to your warnings ; but I

tremble at the thought that the poor 'little bird' has traversed with her little feet the same distance that I have."

Olympia admitted that for a little while she had felt an immense weariness, and when Edouard reproached her for saying nothing about it :

"I did as you did," she said ; "I went forward, my eyes charmed, my mind aroused, my heart content, and I did not know where my body was."

"Ah well," Edouard went on, "I prescribe for you a week's absolute rest as a penitence."

For that week they both stayed indoors playing cards, reading, or making music, even avoiding the fatigue of going to the theatre. One evening two young Italians of aristocratic birth, whom they had met on the boat *The Sully*, knocked at their door. They were received with open arms ; pastries were sent for, and a fashionable tea from Paris was im-

provided. The two visitors were fine fellows, with black and silky beards, and a never-ending smile on their faces, like real sons of the south. Wherever Falconey was, the conversation did not languish for long; they became animated; Olympia shook off her silent humour to joke her guests upon their way of pronouncing French, and joined in their gaiety. They talked of the defence of Genoa by Massena and the second campaign in Italy. Olympia told how in those days her mother accompanied to the campaign an officer of high rank, from whom her father had taken her in order to marry her, and how her birth had been so prompt a result of this union, that the celebration of the marriage only preceded by a month her entry into the world. Edouard, seeing on the faces of the visitors the surprise which this great, though futile, revelation caused them,

tried to distract their attention by witticisms ; but Olympia, turning to him in deliberate fashion :

“ You like me, my dear,” she said to him, “ to speak of my relations and myself as I think proper. I do not make war upon your gentlemanly prejudices, but I cannot stretch my complaisance to the limit of expressing myself as if I shared them. My mother was a strong woman, and because she obeyed a vow of nature, her heart, her caprice if you prefer it, I consider her the equal in merit, if not the superior, of the well-brought-up girls, the docile hypocrites of your class. I am not at all annoyed because these young aristocratic strangers know on this point the opinion of a free and proud Frenchwoman.”

“ Gentlemen,” Edouard said, “ I beg you to believe that, even in France, such opinions are very rare.”

“ If you have the expectation of

making me blush," Olympia went on, "you must begin by persuading me that I am wrong, and that will not be easy. You are supposed to be much cleverer than I ; you have many more mental resources than I ; did you not learn logic at college ?—what is it that prevents you from convincing me ?"

"It does not suit me to attempt the task just now," Edouard replied.

After the departure of these two young men, Falconey returned to the subject. The discussion was resumed with heat ; he had great difficulty in making Olympia understand the impropriety and hatefulness of her conduct. She at last appeared to understand that a daughter had no right to destroy her mother's reputation to sustain a philosophical thesis, even if it were a just and good one ; but if the woman's reason returned to her for a moment at the evidence, her pride did not yield. Later on she

discussed the question again, and spoke more wickedly of her mother than on the first occasion.

Falconey, on his retirement to his room, ruminated upon the unpleasant incident of the afternoon. His memory recalled several occasions when Olympia, usually so sweet and amiable in his presence and that of her old friends, had displayed this access of arrogance in the presence of strangers. It was a remarkable phase of her most complex character. No man was more disposed than Falconey to create causes of strife and dissension. After the work of the memory came that of the imagination. He pictured to himself Olympia quarrelling with him and treating him with lightness or contempt at each fresh face they met with in their travels. Anger and jealousy took him by the throat; he saw himself bullying this haughty creature, and even doing her an injury ;

a separation became inevitable ; he then pictured himself retracing his steps to France alone, returning to his despairing relatives, surprising Pierre, brush in hand, to tell him through his tears the end of his love. In the midst of these dreams his heart contracted, as if this imaginary dénouement was already an accomplished fact. Not having his friend there to assist him in dispelling his chimeræ by a couple of hours' conversation, he spent a part of the night in writing. His letter contained the following paragraph :

“Yes, old friend, for the first time I have seen in the eyes of a person so dear to me a look of disdain, irony and insolence ; for the first time a viper has passed between her pearly teeth and has fallen between us with a hiss. At that moment it seemed to me that a sudden light shone clear into the depths of her soul. I found in it a

hideous sentiment, the one I fear most in the world ; I will call it the hate of love, that is to say, a sort of rage and rancour against the person beloved for the sole reason that he has known how to make himself loved—a desire to bite and tear him, a hatred like that of the slave for his master, of the weak for the strong, of the ungrateful for his benefactor. Women capable of feeling intense joy at this nameless vengeance are said to exist ; and when I think a man can inspire such a sentiment merely through excess of passion, by too great a love, by too much surrender and too much heart, I feel my hair stand up straight ; I believe that I am upon the brink of a precipice ; a little hand is pushing me ; I fall, and I hear behind me a peal of feminine laughter.”

Edouard, soothed by these written confidences, went to bed and slept as well as he was accustomed to do in

Paris after his talks with his friend. The next morning he awoke singing, and before fastening down his letter, he added the postscript :

“Have I not read somewhere that Henry IV and d’Aubigné loved each other so much that they were constantly quarrelling, like a lover and his mistress? We too have quarrelled : that proves we love one another. That is all.”

On her part, Olympia had got up in a good temper. The previous evening’s argument was forgotten ; but at breakfast Falconey looked round, saying :

“I don’t care for this room any more ; we had our first quarrel in it.”

“I too,” Olympia replied, “no longer like superb Genoa as much for the same reason.”

“Ah well, we will go to Florence.”

Falconey would have liked to start at once. He went to the steamer office

and booked two berths for that evening. It was the end of December ; the crossing from Genoa to Leghorn in the teeth of a strong south-west wind was a painful affair. The steamer got out of its course, and several times almost ran ashore. The passengers, enclosed in their cabins, were very sea-sick. Olympia alone defied this terrible malady, and resolutely paced the deck, to the great astonishment of the crew ; Edouard admired her so, and though he was chilled by the weather, sat upon a wooden seat wrapped in his cloak. A comic drawing, religiously preserved by Pierre, represents this episode, the memory of which more than once brightened up their talks. It shows Olympia in a cloth costume buttoned from top to bottom, wearing Hungarian boots, her hands in her pockets, her head high, a cigarette in her mouth, standing straight and strong upon her

feet, wearing an air of superiority like that of the old sergeant looking at the recruit, and her fellow-traveller, whose altered features, bent body, and disordered hair are eloquent testimony of the power of the sea.

CHAPTER IX

THE town of Leghorn offering nothing interesting to the artists, Edouard, who had recovered his strength and spirits as soon as he landed, wished to resume the journey. He made a bargain with a driver, and after visiting the melancholy desert which bears the name of Pisa, our travellers arrived at Florence in the evening.

Most of Italy's great cities bear their history written upon their monuments. The statues of Florence recalled to Falconey so many memories of the beautiful years of the Renaissance, that he wished to re-read the Florentine chronicles upon the spot; but as the days were consecrated to the pleasures of the eye and to the examination of picture-galleries, he spent a part of the night in reading. In a short time he

devoured twenty volumes, perusing at the same time the history of the country, its arts, its literature, and the biographies of its painters. He discovered subjects for operas and poems, of which he composed fragments, and these at a later date he proposed to weld into a serious work. The tragic death of Luiza Strozzi gave him emotions which he translated into energetic and passionate melodies. Olympia, who noticed upon his face signs of fatigue and exhaustion, begged him to be moderate, to work only in the daytime with regular intervals of rest ; but this young man's genius, once warmed by the muses, took the bit between its teeth and did not stop till it had run its course. Nature, too, had given him an organic force much greater than Olympia imagined ; in such moments of crisis enthusiasm became his normal state, and then it seemed to him that the life of the whole world was a sort of vegetation worse than death.

Often, after promising to go to bed on his return from the theatre, he opened his piano, and could be heard in turn playing, singing, pacing his room, and talking aloud before energetically applying himself to his work, at which the sun often surprised him. A month passed in this perpetual fever, and then one morning he had finished transferring his thoughts to paper, and lying down contentedly, slept for nearly twenty-four hours at a stretch.

“ Now it is ended,” he said on waking, “ we can once more talk nonsense, feast, keep a carriage, and take the air as much as we please, for my health. The child of my imagination is born ; I feel sprightly and cheerful.”

His eyes already looked less weary, and there was the blush of spring on his cheeks.

“ But before delivering ourselves over to the exercises of the Bœotians,” he went on, “ my ‘ little bird ’ will be kind enough

to listen to what I have produced. A friend is a chosen auditor whom the artist has the privilege of boring to death with his productions, in return for recognizing the imprescriptible right of yawning, thinking of something else, and even dozing while beating time with an indulgent smile."

Falconey put his manuscripts in order, placed them upon the piano, and played everything he had composed for a month. Although it took a very long time, Olympia appeared to listen with unflagging interest; she even allowed to escape her a few slight signs of emotion and pleasure; but when the author asked her what she thought of his work :

"Frankly," she replied, "I expected something quite different. You have, it is true, the gift of transforming yourself at each new work you undertake; but through changing your style you will end by discovering a bad method. Without a doubt you have there sufficient

to make an artist's reputation ; for a master like yourself, it is not enough. I very much prefer your Spanish melodies."

Author's vanity was not one of Falconey's weaknesses. His modesty even went so far as to have easily made him unjust to himself.

"Oh!" he said, with a laugh, "I thought I was drinking from a golden cup at the fountain of Hippocrene, and I was swallowing water from a cistern out of a wooden vessel. For a month I believed I held the Minotaur by the horns, and I find I have thrown to the ground a rabbit. That misfortune happens every day to many others. Fortunately, you are an artist like myself ; we will seek together for the reason of my deceiving myself so grossly, and then we will proceed to the destruction of the offspring, since it is not born viable.

Olympia begged to explain herself,

not only as to the work as a whole, but upon each fragment ; made unsuccessful efforts to justify her judgment and formulate clearly her opinion. If Falconey had not aided her she would not have been able to offer a single serious criticism. Soon, as the questions became more pressing, she supplemented the good reasons she lacked by bitterness, and last of all by a fit of passion.

“ It is not to me,” she said, “ that you must appeal from this condemnation which you hate. Address yourself to the public. You know very well that I know nothing, and that my work is of little value. When you correct it I submit with docility. How can a great master like yourself lower himself to consult a poor scholar ? You wanted to know my opinion ; I told you it. All the argument in the world will not make me change it. Let us admit that I am ignorant ; I will repeat to you, just like any ordinary woman, ‘ It does not please

me.' In your place I would burn all that rubbish. That is not your opinion ; do not mention the subject again. I neither know, sift, nor discuss : I feel either rightly or wrongly. I have a hard head : it is of no avail for you to belabour it with your questions. Let us leave it at that."

Falconey picked up his papers with the intention of throwing them on the fire ; but at the moment of destroying them, he changed his mind, put his manuscript under his arm and carried it to his room.

"There is no hurry," he said to himself : "I am not sure enough of my judge's good faith. The verdict might be a revenge for my criticism of her first work. I had offended her before knowing her ; we will pass over that trifling revenge."

To drive from his mind the thought of this second quarrel, Edouard opened the history of the Florentine painters by

Philippe Baldinucci. Chance led him to the article consecrated to Cristofano Allori, one of the last great artists of that school. Baldinucci, whose father had known the three Alloris, gives very curious details of the life, manners and character of Cristofano. This painter lived at the end of the sixteenth century, at the period of the decadence of the arts. His was one of those beautiful organizations that Italy alone has the privilege of producing, with diverse aptitudes and every talent: he was a poet, musician, man of intelligence, amiable, and a brilliant talker, an excellent painter, and worthy of a better period; but he was dissipated and more amorous of mistresses than of glory, as often happens to men of genius when, after having struggled against the bad taste of their century, they despise even the unintelligent praises of their contemporaries.

Cristofano Allori passionately loved a

woman who was famous for her beauty even beyond the walls of Florence ; she was called Mezzaferra. She was vain, haughty, cupidious, and as deceitful as a demon. Allori knew it, but he fell in love with her as did Molière of Béjart, and he spared no pains to please her. He had the misfortune to be successful. According to the fashion of the time and country in which he lived, he ruined himself in presents and mad expenses, without Mezzaferra being any more faithful for it. Eaten up with grief and jealousy, Allori conceived the strange idea of addressing by means of a picture a cutting reproach to his mistress, of immortalizing the memory of his sufferings by representing this woman in the figure of Judith and making of the head of Holoernes his own portrait. For three months he allowed his beard to grow, to give himself an unkempt appearance ; insomnia and his torments had provided him with the necessary pallor.

Behind the person of Judith he placed Mezzaferra's mother, the horrible accomplice of her daughter's debauchery. When the picture was finished, Allori exhibited it. The whole of Florence recognized the models and understood the painter's intention. By the aid of curiosity, the success of the picture was very great ; but its painter did not attain his object, for Baldinucci adds : " Cristofano Allori did not become happier ; this extravagant vengeance did not reform his mistress."

The strangeness of this anecdote produced a vivid impression upon Falconey's mind. He shut the book and hastened to the palace of the Pitti to carefully examine Allori's picture, from which up to that time the masterpieces of Raphael and André del Sarto had distracted his attention. He found without difficulty the " Judith," which occupies a place of honour facing the " Vierge à la Chaise." What was his surprise to recognize in

the features, head-dress and even the robes of the beautiful Jewess, points of resemblance to Olympia ! Sitting upon a bench in the embrasure of the window nearest the picture, he kept his eyes fixed for a long time upon this terrible face as he reflected upon his own conduct.

“ Shall I be,” thought he, “ in the state of Allori ? Will there be one day in my works a Judith bearing my head with that ferocious air, and will biographers, if they have a fancy to write my history, discover in my life a Mezzaferra ? ”

In the midst of his reflections, Edouard raised his eyes to a woman who was passing close to him and whose dress grazed his foot ; it was Olympia, accompanied by a young man who appeared to be doing the honours of the museum for her benefit. He saw them both stop in front of “ War,” the picture by Rubens, and the portrait of Leo X by Raphael, and they then went out by the door leading to the Jupiter salon. First of

all Edouard felt an inclination to follow and watch them ; but he was ashamed to adopt the rôle of spy.

“ That is not the way,” he told himself, “ Allori would act.”

He left the museum. In about half-an-hour he saw Olympia return to the house.

“ May I be allowed to inquire where you have been ? ” he said to her.

“ I have just come from Ponte-Vecchio, where I spent some time at a goldsmith’s buying a ring.”

“ Have you not been to the Pitti Palace ? ”

“ Why do you ask me that ? ”

“ Because I thought I saw you there in the company of a young man whose face I did not know.”

“ I know nobody in Florence. You have been the victim of a waking dream. Take care, my friend : this strenuous work in which you have indulged with a sort of frenzy has wearied your brain. You are becoming subject to hallucinations.”

"My brain is in excellent order, and I have good eyes, of which I should like to make use by looking at the little ring purchased at Ponte-Vecchio."

"I have just locked it in the drawer."

"Ah well, open the drawer, and show me the ring if it exists."

"Here it is. It was meant for you as a token of our reconciliation after our second quarrel. Your brusque reception and bad-tempered air prevented me from giving it to you at once, but as you appear to be getting over your temper I will pluck up courage and present my little offering; do you think it is pretty?"

As she spoke, Olympia took from a cardboard box a large gold ring worked to represent scales fastened together by little nail-heads, after the manner of an iron gauntlet, and surmounted by an amethyst. Edouard put it on his finger, and suddenly uttered a childish cry.

"What a charming present!" he said;
"what a wretch I must be to have

suspected you of I do not know what! For devil take me if I know what ideas I had in my mind. You are right : yes, I have been the victim of a hallucination. I was dreaming of a strange and almost fantastic story while I was looking at that Florentine who resembles you. Oh! it's a very foolish business being jealous!"

Falconey kissed Olympia and rushed out to book a box at the theatre La Pergola, where Bellini's *La Somnambula* was announced to be performed. The box was in the bottom tier, and consequently not far above the stalls. While he was listening to the first act, Edouard noticed a fine fellow whose eyes were continually turned in his direction. He was the young man he had seen in the Pitti Palace.

"There is one of my phantoms in flesh and blood," he said to Olympia; "but it seems as if this fine gentleman is subject to visions like myself; without

a doubt he mistakes you for the woman who was with him this morning, for his eyes are fixed upon you."

Olympia turned her glass upon the person indicated, examined him carefully, and replied in the most off-hand fashion :

"I have never seen him before."

There was a full house at the theatre that evening, and the heat was overwhelming. During the interval Edouard and Olympia withdrew to the back of their box, the door of which they opened to let in a little fresh air. The same young man, as he passed the open door, raised his hat, and Olympia replied to his salutation by an imperceptible inclination of the head.

"Good!" Edouard said, "just now you had never seen him before, and now you acknowledge him."

"I have just recognized him," Olympia replied. "He is my goldsmith's son. I paid no attention to him in his father's shop; but according to the

custom of this country, where acquaintances are quickly made, he thinks he is a friend of mine because he has sold me a ring. That is the explanation of this frightful mystery."

"You are always right," Edouard said, with a laugh. "Really, I am pitiable in the part of Othello. The savage Moor is going to get two vanilla ices with which to regale Desdemona."

At the bar Falconey saw the young Florentine.

"Your father," he said to him in Italian, "is a very skilful artist; I too should like to buy a jewel from him. To-morrow I will call at Ponte-Vecchio."

"I do not understand your lordship," the young man replied. "I am Count Meretti, at your service. My father does not sell jewelry, and I live at Santa Croce."

"So you did not meet my fellow-traveller in a jeweller's shop?"

"No, sir, at the Pitti museum this

morning; but I had the honour of speaking to her yesterday at the Medicis Palace, in the hall of the Tribune, in front of the portrait of La Fornarina, whom I consider she very much resembles."

"You are mistaken. It is Allori's Judith to whom she bears a likeness."

Returning to the box, Falconey was silent for the rest of the evening, and while Olympia took off her glove to eat an ice, he murmured in a low voice:

"Mezzaferra!"

Whether his jealousy had any foundation or not, Edouard could not blind himself to the fact that he had been played with by a series of lies, and that discovery gave him a feeling of horror.

"What more need I know?" he said to himself. "Were I to catch her red-handed in an act of treachery or infidelity, how now could I be surprised? Attempt to correct her? What a useless effort; the woman who has lied

once, will do so again. To remain silent and wear the mask of a lover with a woman I no longer adore would be a comedy impossible for me to play ; the words of love would change upon my lips to curses. We must part."

At the prospect of this separation, Edouard thought of everything that remained for him in the world, all that attached him to life before he met this woman and found it had all vanished. The poor fellow began to cry like a child ; then, angered by his own weakness, mad projects coursed through his brain, only to leave him once more in a state of indecision and in tears. The whole night passed in a chaos of sentiment. At daybreak he got up, hired a carriage, and was driven to Fiesole. Olympia heard him return to the house about ten o'clock in the evening ; but she had just gone to bed, and thought the following day would be quite soon enough for explanations. In the middle of the

night she was awakened by the sound of the piano. Falconey, distraught by his emotions, had so far forgotten his own compositions as to be able to judge them as if they had been some one else's work ; he was reviewing them so as to decide whether he ought to preserve or destroy them. The result was favourable ; he was fully convinced that his "Souvenirs of Florence" would one day occupy an honourable position among his works ; while at the thought that Olympia's criticism had only just failed to discourage him and cause him to commit an act of vandalism, he cried :

"You too, Mezzaferra, shall have a place in my work."

The dawn began to appear. Edouard, worn out by fatigue, threw himself down in his clothes upon his bed to try and have a little rest. He was in a deep sleep when the servant knocked at his door to tell him that breakfast was on the table.

Four hours' sleep had so altered the course of his ideas that the adventure at the theatre seemed to have lost half its gravity. The untruth might be an innocent one ; and ought he not at least, before taking extreme measures, to find out if this Count Meretti was a rival, and if Olympia had even thought of him ? To clear up this important point Falconey went down to the dining-room, where breakfast was waiting for him. He gave as a pretext for his excursion to Fiesole his researches with regard to the Tuscan painters, and he added that his studies being finished, he would willingly say good-bye to Florence.

"So would I," Olympia replied.

"What, really !" Edouard cried ; "will you quit this town without regret ?"

"Certainly. Did we not quarrel here as we did at Genoa ?"

"Will you agree to start to-day with me ?"

"As soon as we get up from table, if that suits you."

"I take you at your word. There is no chance for you to withdraw it."

Edouard wished to go to Rome, but Olympia confessed straightforwardly that she might come across a person there she did not care to meet. They decided to sleep that night at Leghorn, and take the boat to Naples from there. A carriage came for the luggage while Edouard went to the police and the consulate. At the end of an hour he returned with the passports duly signed, and when the church clocks struck twelve their carriage was leaving Florence.

"Good gracious!" Edouard said to himself, as he listened to the joyful sound of the bells, "if Count Meretti is in love, he has not made much impression upon his beauty's heart. This time I will not be so foolish as to have an explanation with her."

But Falconey was neither of an age

nor of a character to persist in his resolution to keep silent. During the crossing, favoured by calm and warm weather, in the twinkling light of the stars he leant close to his fellow-traveller's ear and naïvely confessed his suspicions, jealousy, anger, despair and tears.

"I knew all that," Olympia told him. "On my return from the Pitti Palace I was going to tell you of my meeting with Count Meretti, till I read upon your face what you already had in your mind. You already accused me, and I warn you I never stoop to excuse myself. The severest punishment of jealousy is the penalty it bears in itself. I urged you on by my lies, knowing very well you would not fail to obtain proof. The vision of the museum was myself. The ring was bought in Paris: you ought to have recognized that it had not the lustre of a new piece of jewelry. You only discovered a half of my deception; but

that has sufficed. I have attained the object I desired. Profit by this lesson."

Edouard at first complained of the ferocity of her conduct, then ended by imploring her forgiveness, which he obtained, just as if he were the guilty party. In the midst of these confidences the sun gilded the summit of a volcanic cone which had appeared in the distance : it was Ischia. The boat entered the Bay of Naples. They saluted Vesuvius, fort Sainte Elme, and the vast quays of Chiaia. As they landed upon the quay amid the cries of the ragged crowd, Falconey cried :

"God be praised ! we are now in the land of joy and music. Here we will live in harmony ; here the people sing, love and are happy."

CHAPTER X

To obtain the time to seek rooms at their leisure the two travellers first of all took up their quarters at the Vittoria, the most beautiful and expensive hotel in the city. They had adjoining rooms, which were very large in size but badly ventilated and without a fire-place, though one of them contained a good grand piano. The windows, too, facing south, looked out upon the quay, and there was a view over the trees of the Villa Reale, of half the bay, the shores of Sorrento, the entrance of the gulf of Salerno, and the island of Capri, the peaks of which were enveloped in a slight mist like a gauze curtain. Nowhere in the world has Nature done so much to delight the eye. Edouard and Olympia were rapturously gazing upon this beautiful

panorama when a knock came at their door. Falconey uttered a cry of joy as he saw one of his best friends enter the room. This was a young, amiable, enthusiastic and clever Parisian, a passionate admirer of Falconey's talent, with a just appreciation of that of William Caze. His name was Edouard Verdier. Just as he was about to return to Sicily and Calabria he met at Naples travelling companions who urged him to accompany them, but he agreed to delay his departure for three days. The better to spend the time, they resolved to make excursions in the environs of Naples. The first day was devoted to visiting the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii, and the second to the ascent of the summit of Vesuvius.

These excursions were real journeys, and in spite of the extreme pleasure derived from them, the fatigue they occasioned began to make itself felt.

On the third day Olympia was worn out and begged permission to lie in bed, leaving the two young men to go sight-seeing by themselves. They traversed together the district of Pouzzole as far as Lake Fusaro, and returned to Naples very late after visiting Proceda and Ischia. Edouard Verdier departed on the fourth day so worn out with fatigue that he at once went to bed in his cabin without waiting for the boat to leave Messina. Falconey, who had accompanied his friend as far as the quay in the blazing sun, on his return experienced a strange feeling of illness. He seemed to be carrying upon his shoulders a man whose weight crushed him, and whose legs, twined around his waist, gripped him in stifling fashion.

“Oh!” he said to himself, “I am like Sindbad the Sailor with the Old Man of the Sea upon my back. But I shall rid myself of my burden more easily than

Sindbad did: a good night's sleep will free me from my load."

But that night sleep did not come to him; the next morning Falconey remained in bed later than usual, and as his limbs rested, he complained that the fatigue mounted from his body to his head. He managed to get up, and lay upon a couch near the window to enjoy the view.

"We are," he said to Olympia, "in the most charming spot it is possible for lovers to desire. Do you think a person can fall ill in Naples, and die there?"

"Fall ill!" Olympia cried. "God preserve us from that!"

"He will preserve us. Do you not see that He is smiling upon us through all this Nature in her holiday attire? I seek in vain amid the objects that surround us for a sign harbinger of His anger; but I am afraid to find it in myself. I am so weak that the slightest

sound makes me start. A giant's hand, burning and gauntleted with mail, rests upon my head, and my ideas, frightened away by this menacing hand, hurl themselves against the walls of my cranium like birds in a cage. I am at the mercy of chance : an accident, a shock, even bad news would suffice to kill me."

In the hope of dissipating these presentiments by the aid of music, Olympia suggested playing on the piano the overture of Mozart's *Don Juan*, which was one of Edouard's favourite pieces. While she went into her room to get the score, Falconey remembered that the beginning of this overture was the exact reproduction of the entrance of the Commander to Don Juan's supper. On thinking of the sinister refrain which marks the opening bars of the overture, the piece appeared to him to be unsuitable for the occasion ; so with the intention of asking for more lively music he got

up and went after Olympia to tell her to bring the score of the *Barber of Seville*.

The old oak folding doors which divided the two rooms were eight or ten feet high, very massive, and fastened by a rusty latch difficult to manipulate. After turning the brass handle without effect, Edouard, with an impatient movement, violently shook the door ; the right half slipped from its hinges and fell upon a stand with a terrible crash. Olympia in terror uttered a loud scream, while Falconey, thinking he had killed her, threw himself upon the floor. The hotel servants rushed up at the noise and found him suffering from a violent nerve attack. He did not recover consciousness for an hour. A disturbance of the blood followed this upset to his nerves. He blushed and paled in turn. He complained of unbearable heat and his teeth chattered.

“I am taken,” he said to Olympia. “Chance is our master. We could never have foreseen this accident. Do not dissimulate, poor friend, I am going to give you a great deal of pain. It is no longer ‘the Old Man of the Sea’ on my shoulders : Death is there in person, and I am going to have a grim struggle with him. Send at once for a doctor, the necessary witness of the duel. I must be bled, in fact lose much blood. I have Vesuvius in my head and the Solfatara in my breast. But I am young and robust ; when the doctor comes, do not let yourself be frightened either by prognostics or the name of my malady, however sonorous it may be.”

Falconey had brain fever.

CHAPTER XI

IF Italy is the most delightful country on earth for lovers and healthy folk, it is the worst place of all for an illness. The traveller in danger of death who gets better in spite of the doctor's ignorance, the apothecary's carelessness, the indifference and laziness of the servants, the cupidity of everybody, the fireless rooms, open doors, disjointed windows, the paucity of linen, and deprivation of care and help of all sorts, has a very narrow escape. The doctor, who had been sent for at midday, had not arrived at four o'clock. During this time the malady progressed with giant strides. The Angelus was sounding from the church steeples when at last the "illustrious Doctor Berizzo" was ushered in. He was an old man

of eighty, wearing a wig which had been once black but was now rusty with age, of which his person presented a decrepit emblem. He was given an exact account of all that had taken place. The sick man said to him in a weak voice :

“Doctor, will you refuse me the favour of bleeding me ? ”

“ No, excellency,” the old man replied. But searching for the vein with trembling hands and dim eyes, the poor man did not know where to put his lancet.

“ You are afraid to wound me,” Edouard said to him, “ and yet you are not afraid to let me die.”

“ Die ! ” the doctor repeated, with a nod of the head, in a fashion which signified : “ It does not rest with me to prevent you from dying.”

Then he added :

“ How quiet your ladyship is. I

will send a young fellow who will let as much blood as you please."

It was three o'clock, Italian time—nearly nine o'clock in France—when the young surgeon entered. He was a good-looking young fellow with regular features, broad shoulders, big, deep-set eyes, a little hand, a sensual mouth, and teeth like fresh almonds. Olympia threw herself into his arms, crying :

"Save him !"

In spite of his wandering mind, Falconey, surprised at this pathetic outburst, murmured in a low voice : "Why did she not embrace the old man like that ?"

The first blood-letting did not produce the desired effect ; it seemed, on the contrary, that the malady had been awaiting the arrival of a redoubtable antagonist with whom to struggle. Hour by hour the patient got worse till the following day. For six days and

nights Edouard remained in a state of delirium and mental confusion which needed an incessant watch. Palmeriello—that was the young surgeon's name—displayed great zeal, and spent two whole nights by his patient's bedside. At last, on the morning of the seventh day, after a final paroxysm, nature, having resisted so many attacks, wrested the victory, though completely exhausted by the struggle. Edouard appeared to suddenly collapse, and became so utterly prostrate that the watchers thought he was dead. But it was not even lethargy, for he gradually recovered his power of seeing external objects and also the knowledge of his sensations. His memory recalled nothing of what had happened during the six days he was suffering from fever; but he felt profound satisfaction in recognizing the fact that he was lying in a bed with a cold water bandage upon his forehead.

Edouard Falconey alone was able to recount events which have exerted considerable influence upon his genius and upon his entire life ; he was the only one able to relate the details of that strange day, co-ordinate them, fix them precisely, and give them to the light. This is the narrative of it which he himself dictated to Pierre twenty years later. It is Falconey who is going to speak.

“ Palmeriello and Olympia were sitting by the side of my bed. I saw one, could not see the other, but I heard them both. At times the sound of their voices seemed to me weak and far away ; at other times they sounded in my ears with unbearable noise.

“ I felt chill blasts mount to me from the bottom of my bed, an icy vapour like that coming from a cellar or a tomb, penetrating me up to the very marrow of my bones. I conceived the idea of

calling, but I did not attempt that, so far was it from the seat of my thoughts to the organs which ought to have expressed them. At the idea that I might be thought dead and buried with this remnant of life still in my brain, I was afraid; yet it was impossible for me to give any sign. Fortunately a hand, I did not know to whom it belonged, took away from my forehead the cold water bandage, and I felt a little warmth.

“I then heard my two guardians consult as to my state. They no longer had any hopes of saving me. Olympia took a small mirror and held it before my face. I saw in this glass a mask quite unknown to me; the eyes were more than half closed, the eyeballs dull and fixed, and the lips contracted. It was my own reflection I had seen: I understood in a moment, and I thought that with such an appearance I should myself vote for my own interment.

“ But Olympia showed the mirror to the doctor, and told him that I still breathed. Palmeriello came to the bed, turned down the clothes, and took my hand to feel my pulse. As he was standing, he was obliged to raise my hand and arm. The movement he caused me to make, although a very simple and natural one, was so brusque to my poor frame that I suffered as much as if I had been quartered. The time my hand rested in the doctor's seemed a century. I heard these words :

“ ‘ If he is not dead, he is very nearly so.’

“ Palmeriello did not take the trouble to replace my arm gently upon the bed : he threw it as if it were an inert thing. At this terrible shock, I felt all my bones crack, all my nerves and fibres break at once ; a thunder-clap burst in my head, and I fainted.

“I am not aware how long I remained unconscious. When I recovered consciousness it was dark. There was a deep silence in the room. A pretty little servant whom we had nicknamed ‘Good-night’ (because she never failed to wish us a very good-night when she brought the lights) knocked timidly at the door. Some one told her to come in, and I realized that I was not alone. The young girl placed two lighted candles upon a table, and when she had uttered in an undertone her usual phrase, she asked if Madam would have dinner. Olympia told her to come back in half-an-hour. The servant went out, and the room was once again in silence.

“Then I saw a picture which I myself would have taken for a sick man’s vision if other proofs and the most complete admissions had not changed my suspicions into certainty. Facing me upon the wall of the room, I saw two

great shadows cast by the light of the candles, which were in a line, and consequently threw but one shaft of light. These two shadows represented a woman sitting upon a man's knees and reclining with her head thrown back. I had not the strength to raise my eyes to see the upper part of the group, where the man's head would be ; but the head I desired to see itself came within the range of my vision. It approached the woman's head, and the attitude of the two shadows was that of a kiss. I must admit that at first this picture did not make a vivid impression upon my numbed mind. I required some time to realize the purport of such a revelation ; but soon by degrees I attained a state of astonishment, indignation and horror.

“The servant did not return before eight o'clock. While she laid the table, I heard Palmeriello teasing her in the dialect of the country. He had his hat

upon his head and was ready to go, when Olympia asked him to dine with her. The servant had placed the dishes upon the table and departed; but Palmeriello accepted the invitation, took a plate, a spoon and fork, pulled a knife out of his pocket, and sat down to table with the air of a gourmet. My two guardians had forgotten me. They dined very gaily. I recollect the conversation turned upon the gastronomic productions of the country, and they arranged to have dinner together at the village of Fuori di Grotta.

“When, I asked myself, do they intend to go and dine together tête à tête at Fuori di Grotta? Apparently it is when they have taken me far away from here. In their minds I am already dead.

“I thought that the diners were reckoning without their host. I believe that my strength then began to return,

for it seemed to me that I smiled and probably made some grimace, this being the first symptom of my return to life. I tried to turn my head upon the pillow, and it moved. This success made me so pleased that I should have liked to call out to my guardians and say, 'Friends, I am alive!' But I thought they would not rejoice, and I watched them attentively. I saw them both drink, one after the other, and it was in vain I looked, for I could see only one glass upon the table.

"I must confess with humility, though groaning with fury and full of jealousy, I went to sleep. Wilful and all-powerful nature commanded me, and I obeyed. At midnight I was awakened by a hand touching mine. My arm moved, and this time I did not feel any pain.

"'He is better,' the doctor said. 'If he continues like it till to-morrow he is saved.'

“ I was really saved. Palmeriello prepared to take his departure. Olympia told him to wait a moment and she would show him out. They retired behind a screen which masked the door, and I lost sight of them. Afterwards Olympia came to get a candle to light Palmeriello. They stayed a long while upon the staircase. I then remembered the picture of the embracing shadows, the conversation at dinner, and the detail of the one glass out of which both had drunk. For a moment I hoped I had seen all these things in a dream ; but the table was there, it had not been cleared ; it had even been pushed close to my bed. By a supreme effort I succeeded in raising the upper part of my body upon my trembling hands. My head rose above the table. I gazed with all the strength of my eyes : there was only one glass ! I knew enough.”

CHAPTER XII

TWENTY years later, Edouard Falconey, after dictating to Pierre what we have just read, considered it useless to go further ; but he told a great deal more. Olympia, on finding out that it was possible to save her sick man, rediscovered her good instincts ; for this woman in the midst of her errors retained certain virtues. Three weeks of intelligent care and extreme attention completed Edouard's cure. During this time the assiduity of Palmeriello and Olympia's devotion did not relax for a moment, so that on getting up for the first time and looking from the window upon the beautiful view of the Bay of Naples, the patient felt himself full of affection and gratitude to the two persons who had saved him.

If at that moment Falconey had told Olympia all that he knew, the proofs of affection he had received from her would have found a place in the scale of good and evil. A frank explanation would have settled many things, and at least Edouard, in losing a mistress, would have retained two friends. But at the idea of giving expression to such terrible sorrow, his courage failed him; he felt himself weaken, and put off the explanation till the morrow, and then till the following day. This hesitation involved him in a series of grave mistakes. His temper became morose and threatening, his character changed. The presence of Palmeriello exasperated him. Eaten up with jealousy, stifled by his secret, he spoke a mysterious language, just as Hamlet did.

The situation became still more complicated when Edouard recognized that love survived in his heart its wounds

and outrages, and that the real cause of his silence was the fear of an inevitable and definite separation. At times waves of passion took the place of his outbursts of anger, and when he had wrung from Olympia some token of love, he changed his tone and spoke to her contemptuously. Without doubt his conduct was unreasonable; but who will dare to fix the degree of weakness where ought to stop a young man endowed with excessive sensibility betrayed by the woman he loves in horrible circumstances, and struck down by two maladies, one as terrible as the other: brain fever and love! But at the end of a fortnight calmness and reason returned with strength. Verdier, who then came back from his trip to Sicily, guessed what had passed between Olympia and the doctor, and he told his friend before returning to France what he had observed. Falconey, now in full posses-

sion of his faculties once more, made up his mind to terminate the affair in the manner delicacy and dignity dictated.

The Hotel Vittoria being no longer tenable because of the expense incurred there, they left it to reside in rooms which the doctor had taken the trouble to obtain. They were two adjoining rooms in a quiet house in the Vico Carminiello, a little street which opened on to the Chiaia Quay.

One evening, when Palmeriello had told his friends that he would not visit them, Falconey found the occasion suitable for the explanation he desired. He broached the subject in straightforward fashion, so as to avoid giving Olympia any temptation to tell a lie. At first she seemed thunderstruck, then she began to loudly protest. Edouard felt himself obliged to narrate everything he had seen and heard.

“ Don't think of denying it any more,”

he said afterwards ; " you will only irritate me. Quarrels only lead to reconciliations between lovers, and we are that no longer. It only remains for me to tell you things which would make you retire underground. I will spare you. I will go still further : I will excuse you. Let us forget the date and the circumstances of your infidelity. Be sincere. Tell me that you love this man, and give me your hand."

" Never ! " Olympia cried, pacing the room ; we are not going to part like this. I am neither your mistress nor your friend. I am an injured woman. Only a fool would turn into accusations the nightmares of a disordered brain. I will only take up enough time to disabuse your mind, though I despise justifications, and then you shall go your way and I will go mine."

" As you please," Edouard replied.
" To-morrow, when Palmeriello comes,

I will question him. We shall see whether he will be more frank than you are. But do not go out of here—do not try to warn your accomplice, or else I shall refuse to hear your defence. Do not delude yourself: I am no longer the poor lover of Florence whose fits of jealousy were a pastime for you. Love is dead. Judith, you have killed Holofernes. You left Paris with a child, but to-day you are dealing with a man.”

“A suspicious and ungrateful man,” Olympia went on; “a fanatic enemy of his own happiness. I will leave him and abandon him to his folly and remorse. I will overwhelm him with my disdain.”

“First of all justify yourself; you shall afterwards overwhelm me if you can.”

“Yes, I will do so. I will teach you that my soul is superior to yours.”

“That we shall see to-morrow at the discussion.”

In spite of the assurance she displayed, Olympia feared that discussion before a watchful observer. She wanted to try some bold stroke for the benefit of her cause. To warn Palmeriello, to talk to him and arrange beforehand what answers he should give, would have been a master stroke ; but such tactics were too obviously indicated by the position of affairs for Falconey not to have anticipated them.

As at the Hotel Vittoria, a door separated the two rooms of their new apartments. In the middle of the night, Edouard, on waking up, saw a light beneath this door. He got up quietly, put on his dressing-gown, and hastily entered Olympia's room. A rustling which he heard told him she was concealing a paper in her bed. Besides, she had a portfolio upon her knees, a pen in her mouth, and an inkstand within reach.

"May I inquire to whom you are writing?" Edouard asked.

"I am not writing a letter," she replied, "I am composing music."

"Considering the terms we are upon at present," Edouard went on, "that proves on your part great mental detachment. Unfortunately you did not hide your letter quickly enough, I saw the movement and heard the rustle of the paper. Why this obstinacy, this desire to conspire with Palmeriello? Instead of it all simply give me an admission of your new love, and as soon as I can get into a carriage I will start for France."

"Do not hope for anything of the sort," Olympia said, with a fresh burst of rage. "Do you think I shall let you go to tell in France what you think of me, and present to our friends your visions as realities? Either you will recognize your mistake, or you will not leave Naples."

“ I should like to know how you will prevent me from going.”

“ By having you confined.”

“ Confined! Where?”

“ In a madhouse, for I shall say you are mad, and people will believe me. The hotel staff, who have seen you delirious, will bear witness that it is the truth. It only requires a doctor's word for me to have you taken and conveyed to Averse.”

“ Averse!” Falconey repeated, “ the Bicêtre of Naples!”

“ You will sleep there to-morrow night. That is why I wish to plot with Palmeriello. Do you understand now?”

Falconey often told his friends that at this moment Olympia's eyes darted such terrible gleams that he felt himself dominated by her. At the thought that these threats could not be vain, that he was at the mercy of a vindictive woman

and an obscure doctor whose name was the only thing he knew about him, his naturally vivid imagination, excited by grief, conjured up a picture of the interior of a lunatic asylum : the padded rooms, the harsh treatment, the strait-jacket ; and he was seized with so great a horror of it that he fled into his room and threw himself upon his bed, stammering :

“ I am lost ! They will confine me as a lunatic, and I shall become one.”

His fear kept him awake. His eyes and ears being on the alert, he heard Olympia get out of bed, walk across her room, gently open the window and close it again. These extraordinary movements made him suppose that she had renounced the idea of warning her accomplice by letter, and that she had torn up what she had written and thrown the fragments out of the window.

“ If I had,” he said to himself, “ the strength and courage to go down into

the street at daybreak, I should perhaps find a few scraps of the paper! Those bits would contain a significant word or two, and that might suffice to thwart their plot and confound both of them."

As soon as he saw the light of day, Falconey noiselessly dressed himself. The two rooms had separate doors into a corridor. He went down-stairs on tip-toe, in his dressing-gown and slippers. The house was still asleep, and yet Edouard found the door wide open.

A little surprised at this circumstance, he looked around him. Three steps away in the street he saw a woman wearing a white skirt and a big shawl, while on her head she had a nightcap covered by a handkerchief tied beneath her chin. She appeared to be searching on the ground, with her head bent forward and her hands upon her knees, for some article she had lost. A strong wind was blowing from the north-west,

and the waves were breaking upon the quay, so that the searcher did not hear Edouard approach. He tapped her on the shoulder, saying in a solemn voice, like the ghost of Hoffmann in the fairy tale *Majorat* :

“William—William! what are you doing here at this time in the morning?”

The searcher trembled and stepped back a couple of paces.

“We shall not find the fragments of your letter,” Edouard went on. “The wind has swept this street all night long. Your expedition has been unsuccessful, while mine has succeeded. Our meeting beneath this window is better than a document with your signature attached. Woman, it is cold ; let us go back to the house.”

“No,” Olympia replied, “I will not go in. It is you who have committed an imprudence in coming here at this hour. This last act of folly delivers you

into my hands. Go back yourself to the house, and wait until I return with the doctor."

"We will go for him together," Edouard retorted, "for I intend to remain not more than a step away from you, and if you accuse me of madness, you will do so in my presence."

"Ah well, follow me if you can." They both began to run in the direction of the quay. Falconey found for this violent exercise more strength than he believed possible. For a moment he lost sight of Olympia at the bend of the street; but reaching that point, he saw her twenty yards away. She passed the sentry of the Château de l'Oeuf, who came out of his box and opened his great eyes wide with surprise; then she went down to the shore and jumped into a boat, ordering the rowers to push off; but Edouard, who was close behind her, also leapt into the boat, slipped beneath

the awning, and sat down by Olympia's side, crying :

"The madman is on the open sea."

"Excellencies, where shall we go?" one of the boatmen asked.

"To Portici!" Olympia cried.

The boat set off rapidly, balancing itself upon the crests of the waves. It doubled the end of the mole and steered for Portici. The two travellers remained side by side, with clenched teeth, looking straight in front of them. After three-quarters of an hour's silence the awning was pulled aside and the boat touched the beach.

"Excellencies, we have arrived," said one of the crew.

Olympia leapt lightly on shore and began to run, this time to tire out Edouard, to escape from him and return to the town by land without him. With this object in view she took a rocky path,

turned the corner of a wall, and concealed herself in a cemetery the gate of which was open. Hardly had she sat down, quite out of breath, upon a tombstone, than she saw Falconey standing in front of her with arms folded. She burst into tears of rage and spite.

"If I were in your place," Edouard told her, "I would give up an impossible enterprise and admit that you are a liar."

"Ah well, yes," she replied.

"And a distressed liar," Edouard went on. "This admission disarms me. Add that you are Palmeriello's mistress, and it will be my only revenge."

"Ah well, I am his mistress."

"I don't want anything else from you. Now, if you believe me, we will return to Naples."

They descended the path leading to the shore together, one still weeping, the other already full of kindness and com-

passion. During their crossing Falconey went on speaking :

“Calm yourself,” he said ; “let us, if possible, forget this sad adventure. I will not say that I forgive you, since the very word is an offence to you. I desire you to be happy. On that account it is necessary for this fellow Palmeriello to esteem you. So never ask him if he would have had the audacity to second you in your plan. Could you even love him if he were a knave and a wretch? Try to look upon him as an honourable man. To promise never to tell this terrible story to Pierre, who loves me like a brother, to Verdier, whose friendship for me is a sort of cult, would be to buoy you up with false hope. Nor should I dare to assure you that in my future works there will be no trace of these memories. When the muse desires to speak, the poet or artist cannot remain silent. But Pierre and Verdier are firm

friends. The muse sings without the man being obliged to tell the subject of his suffering. I do not know what you have made of me. Is my genius destroyed, my imagination extinguished? I am not sure. On the other hand, will the drops of blood which fell from my wound be fecund germs? We shall see later. Would it be better for you if I had died in Italy in a madhouse? I think nothing of it. Truth is like an imperceptible seed; it flies through the air and falls anywhere and everywhere. It is buried beneath a heap of rubbish; one fine day it emerges in the form of a blade of grass. A passer-by notices it, carries it off, and shows it to the whole world. Your calculation was bad. Revert to my friendship—that you will find better for you. You have not yet lifted a hand to tap at the door which it opens. I already feel that I pity you with all my heart. I am dying, yet I will give you

attention ; I am in despair, and it is I who will console you."

Olympia made no reply, except a sob, not because she was touched by such generosity, but because this generosity was a defeat for her and a victory for him. But, failing her heart, her intelligence showed her that her abasement would be greater if she appeared quite insensible. She offered her hand to Edouard, murmuring something like thanks ; then she dried her tears and the storm was over.

Both then saw a rare phenomenon in Naples. It was the month of March. The wind was icy, and a fine rain mixed with snow was falling. Edouard was trembling with cold, which was all the more dangerous to him as his running had made him perspire ; Olympia wished to wrap him in her shawl. Another cause of embarrassment presented itself : it was nine o'clock in the morning ; how

could they go back to the house attired as they were through the midst of a laughing and noisy crowd? A short distance from the harbour they told the rowers to land them at the most deserted spot they could find. One of the boatmen obtained a carriage, around which a few passers-by formed a curious and interested group; but Edouard's dressing-gown was new and of good material; so the good folk respectfully saluted the young foreign gentleman, saying with an air of benevolence and interest :

“ Poor fellow ! He is ill.”

The return to their rooms was managed in the simplest of ways. Palmeriello did not come till midday. At a glance he realized that an explanation had taken place between Edouard and Olympia. The events of the day were partly shown by the severe face of the one and the embarrassed manner of the other. He would have liked to have received from

his accomplice a sign of connivance or a warning as to the line of conduct he ought to adopt ; but he could not intercept a single glance from her obstinately lowered eyes. The confusion spread to himself. Falconey made an excuse of fatigue and a desire to sleep in order to get them both to go into the other room, and he added in meaning tones :

“ You have something to say to one another. Come back in half-an-hour.”

The conference did not last as long as that. In five minutes Palmeriello reappeared by himself ; he threw himself impetuously upon Edouard’s hand and covered it with kisses.

“ Generous man,” he said ; “ so you know my crime ? I bow down and worship your magnanimous disposition. I hate, despise and condemn myself ; but I am still capable of repentance. I will expiate my faults by a noble sacrifice.”

“How do you mean?” Edouard asked as he withdrew his hand.

“She belongs to you,” Palmeriello went on; “she is not mine, this woman, whom an insensate intoxication has thrown into my arms. I will give her back to you. You shall go away with her, and I will die a slow and cruel death while you sail towards a land I shall never see. Give me back a little of your friendship. I have strength and courage. In this iron body there is a lion’s heart.”

The Neapolitan struck with his fist his broad chest.

“You too,” Edouard cried laughingly, “are you also going to make a scene? Do you think that by chance I am going to whine in your arms? Will you leave your chest alone? Understand, doctor of my heart, that in your medicine chest there is no remedy for the injury you have done. If you have no more spleen

than I have, we shall be good friends for the few days I have still to stay with you two ; and hasten to set me on my feet again so that I may be for as short a time as possible the unwelcome third person."

"By Bacchus!" the Neapolitan said in stupefaction, "if our parts were exchanged, do you not know that I should have stabbed you?"

"You would have bravely planted your knife in my side at a street corner, would you not? I, for my part, if you cure me too thoroughly, will give you a good hiding with my fists on the day of my departure. Go at once to the kitchen and order some soup for your patient, for I am dying of hunger. This evening I will regale you with macaroni, from which my part of the dinner has first of all been taken, and your gluttony shall preserve me from imprudence."

Olympia was listening at the door,

Her pride, that great spring of her soul, was no longer in full play ; that is why she had a good impulse. She let the little doctor descend to the kitchen and then opened the door.

“ My Edouard,” she said, as she fell on her knees, “ how happy your gaiety makes me feel ! It has come back, then ? So you can be content to enjoy life, love, perhaps, and adore a woman better than I am ? ”

“ No, signora, not yet,” Edouard replied. “ My good humour is only a way of helping you drive away sad thoughts. Would you like me to interpose between two persons who are singing a duet ? Since you no longer love me, what I have in my soul belongs to myself alone.”

“ What ! ” Olympia went on, with emotion, “ shall I know no more of it ? ”

“ Nothing more, signora. You are a

Neapolitan. Come, get up ; you must not on the first day give offence to your lover. He is kind and a good fellow ; do not let him see you on your knees in front of a stranger. Get up, and let us talk of other things as we peel an orange. The weather and the colour of your dress appear to me subjects of conversation absolutely above reproach for two persons who do not desire to take undue advantage of a tête-à-tête."

The most perfect harmony reigned for a week among the three friends. Edouard knew how to maintain a position which would have been a difficult one for a less-educated man. Without showing exaggerated reserve, he carefully avoided any allusion to his old relations with Olympia ; even his familiarity had the character of complete unconcern. Shades of expression of this sort are not lost upon a Parisian used to the world, and a woman ; it was all

Hebrew to Palmeriello. The poor fellow, although clever enough for the country in which he lived, knew very little outside his profession and the city of his birth. When the conversation soared, he did not shine; Edouard had the good taste only to talk of commonplace subjects in his presence, and he found a way of outdoing this rival who had supplanted him. Palmeriello, though, atoned for the intelligence he lacked by a certain grace and Southern vivacity.

It seemed as if things were progressing in this way most satisfactorily; yet Olympia, instead of aiding Edouard, soon took a malicious pleasure in making him deviate from the line he had adopted, and placing these two men in a false position as regards one another. She often bullied Palmeriello without a reason, while her smiles and amiability were for Edouard. In her duties of nurse

she affected an assiduity which resembled love very closely, and when Palmeriello unwittingly frowned, she redoubled her attentions. Falconey pointed out to her that this conduct was not loyal.

"That has nothing to do with it," Olympia cried. "I don't care what he thinks. Let him be jealous if he likes. Have you not been jealous?"

"Do you not love him, then?" Edouard asked.

"I love him and hate him at the same time."

"As for me," Edouard went on, "I have a reason to pity myself like Palmeriello. At my age, a person does not cure himself of an amorous passion in a week, and instead of dressing the wound you have made, you are ceaselessly irritating it. Under the pretext of caring for my body, you forget that you can kill my soul."

"No," Olympia replied, "I do not

forget it. I do not want you to cure yourself; I do not desire your wound to heal."

"And you dare tell me so to my face! Do you know that after such an admission I have the right to look upon you as the enemy of my rest, as a dangerous and detestable woman!"

"Detest me; I would a hundred times rather have hate than indifference. I cannot bear the off-hand tone you have adopted to me."

"Still pride—nothing but pride," Falconey murmured.

"I cannot bear," Olympia went on, "the friendly manner without malice you display to your rival; for after all I have preferred this saw-bones, dull and colourless though he is, to you."

"Be quiet!" Edouard said in such imperative tones that she stopped stammering — "worthless creature! Be

silent, or I shall at once leave this house never to return."

Olympia fled into her room, uttering cries which seemed to contain more anger than grief.

CHAPTER XIII

THE following day Falconey, though very weak and in great pain, begged Palmeriello to find him a servant willing to travel with him to France. The Neapolitan displayed much zeal and promptness in fulfilling his commission. He found a sort of Figaro of twenty-five without relatives ready to see the world for a consideration. Two seats were booked four days in advance in the mail-coach from Naples to Rome without Olympia knowing anything at all about it.

On the morning of the day fixed for departure the Figaro took up his duties and proceeded to pack his new master's belongings. Olympia watched these preparations with a melancholy air without asking for any explanation.

Edouard, who feared a scene, gave his servant a hundred minute directions. Palmeriello's arrival created a fortunate diversion. He expected to be scolded for keeping the secret of the departure ; but when Olympia saw him she seemed to suddenly revert to her most amiable frame of mind. Sitting by his side with her hand upon his shoulder, she displayed great joy at the idea that she would soon be able to go about Naples with him, go by boat to Capri, to Sorrento, and to Castellamare ; having no invalid to look after, she would then have perfect liberty ; she wished to take a cottage at Pausilippo near an orange wood, to enjoy the delights of the country, of spring, and the advantage of possessing two good legs and health.

“That is it, friends,” Edouard interposed ; “amuse yourselves thoroughly. I am like the young German baron who lost his legs to the devil at piquet.

That misfortune will not prevent me from travelling four hundred leagues by the aid of the legs of others."

"As a beginning," Olympia went on, "we will dine at *Fuori di Grotta* this evening."

The name *Fuori di Grotta* suddenly recalled to Edouard the moment when the truth had first appeared to him in all its nakedness. He shuddered and changed countenance. Olympia noticed this and redoubled her caresses, calling *Palmeriello* her dear little doctor. But this fictitious gaiety did not last; it entirely disappeared when the time for departure came. A deathlike silence reigned in the carriage on the drive to the General Post Office. While the luggage was being placed in the coach, Olympia got up impetuously from the stone bench where she had been sitting and plucked *Falconey* by the arm.

"Good gracious!" she said to him, "I

have forgotten everything. Are you leaving me the title of friend? Shall I see you again some day? Will you write to me?"

"I want to be your friend, and will do as you wish."

"You will not go without telling me that you forgive me?"

"I thought you did not like that word; and besides, I have already forgiven you."

"At least you will not refuse me, on your departure, the charity of a kiss."

But Falconey had too much difficulty in mastering his own emotions to allow himself to be invaded by those of other people. He furtively pressed Palmeriello's hand, and selected a moment when Olympia was wiping her eyes to get into the coach.

The ill this woman had done to Jean Cazeau had in this way rebounded upon her.

"You are pitiless," she said as she seized the hand Edouard offered her through the window. "I am very unhappy."

"Do you think that I, too, am at the topmost pinnacle of happiness?"

The coach started.

"Good-bye!" Edouard called out.

"No," Olympia replied, "not good-bye! Never good-bye!—au revoir!"

"Ah well!—au revoir, then!"

"We shall have a lovely day for our dinner at *Fuori di Grotta*," Palmeriello said.

"I shall not dine with you, fellow; I shall not dine at all. I think you are very bold to pretend to console me by means of a pleasure jaunt in your stupid country."

"Dear Olympia," the young doctor went on, "your wishes are sacred commands to your slave. Provided that you love me, I shall never complain."

“Perhaps,” Olympia replied. “Do not desire too ardently for me to love you.”

Hardly had he left Naples when Edouard asked himself what obliged him to go. The laws of the world, pride, and human respect? What did all that signify to a wretched lover? Rest of the body, calm of the soul, comprised nothingness, solitude and that worst of scourges, ennui! When he thought of his relations, he remembered the tears his departure had caused them, their fears and their sad presentiments which had been so thoroughly realized; they only knew one-half of his physical sufferings and none of his heart-aches; was he not taking to them sorrow and anxiety which he could spare them by not going? While the horses were being changed at Capua, Edouard saw a carriage pass on the road to Naples; could he not return to Olympia, throw

himself at her feet, ask her pardon, resume his position of deserted lover, and say to her :

“ It is impossible for me to live without you. You were right : yes, I am mad ; I deserve to be confined for wishing to leave you. I am returning ; punish me, make me suffer again. Olympia ! Olympia ! do you no longer desire to torment me ? ”

Fortunately such resolutions are rarely carried into execution. The carriage passed on ; the horses were changed ; Edouard once more took his seat with a sigh, and mechanically, without a thought for anything, with stunned mind and swollen heart, pursued his journey, though grief prevented him retaining any impression of it. Only when crossing the Alps did he get down at a picturesque spot, whence he bade farewell to the Italy he would never see again, and, mingling in his thoughts the seduc-

tiveness of this beautiful land with the charms of his faithless mistress, he laid the blame upon nature for all that he suffered ; he complained bitterly of the combat that love and regrets waged in his soul with right, dignity and honour.

“ Almighty God ! ” he cried, “ since I love that woman no longer, remove her from my memory ! ”

In the early days of April, Pierre, one morning looking out of the window, saw a cab stop at the door of the house. A man in travelling dress alighted with considerable difficulty, leaning upon a stick and supported by his servant's arm. The man had very little hair upon his forehead, a long beard, thin face, swollen legs, and a worn and weak look ; crossing the courtyard, he raised his eyes, cast an affectionate glance at the whole of the house, and nodded his head to Pierre, who then recognized him and rushed down-stairs. The two friends

embraced, and the invalid sat down for a moment at the foot of the staircase.

“ Dear friend,” Pierre said, “ you have followed the letter announcing your return so closely that we did not expect to see you again to-day. You cannot appear suddenly in this deplorable state. Let me precede you ; precautions are necessary in a case like yours, where one’s relatives love one so dearly.”

“ Am I, then, so greatly changed ? ” Edouard asked.

“ We will talk of that later.”

Pierre then entered the room, the door of which was open ; Edouard, who slowly followed him, stopped in the ante-room. Soon after three persons rushed in ; there was a sound of heartrending cries, and the door closed.

CHAPTER XIV

EDOUARD DE FALCONEY had an excellent constitution, and what the savant M. Flourens, in his charming book *La Longévité*, calls a great reserve of strength. He none the less had to recover from the deep shock he had lately received. As we have remarked, Olympia had admirably nursed the sick man, but she had badly treated the convalescent. Three months' calm sufficed to repair his physical disorder ; Edouard's face began to get round ; his hair grew abundantly, and little by little he recovered his vivacity, his freshness and all the pleasing signs of youth and health.

Now the sensations of a man in good health are not the same as those of an invalid, and sensations determine the course of ideas ; Falconey, on experienc-

ing a sort of motiveless joy, believed in good faith that the wound in his heart was cured. But when he wished to return to society, his pleasures, his reading and his work, he perceived that everything which had formerly charmed him he now viewed with indifference. His taste had changed in literature, music and painting. The old man had fled, and a still unknown man had taken possession of the deserted shell. The latter appeared to be more difficult to please, a severer critic, of a more reflective turn of mind and of a less communicative humour than his predecessor, so it remained to be found out if his imagination had the faculty of production. Edouard did not desire to hurry in applying the test. Not to lay himself open to the charge of sterility, he published his "Souvenirs of Florence," in which a new transformation of his talent was observed. While his reputa-

tion grew, he thus had the leisure to gather all the fruit which experience and grief could give him, and prepare for what in painting would have been called his third period. But as he had yet neither touched a pen nor opened his piano, Pierre asked him the reason of what was taking place in his mind, and whether the muse would not soon have something to say.

“ I do not know what I feel,” Edouard replied. “ I am neither gay nor sad ; I seem to no longer have anything to hope for or attain ; and yet when I return to the house in the evening, and the summer breeze blows in my face, I stretch out my arms and something which resembles hope penetrates into my heart. When I roam in this solitude which is called the world, I look around me, as a wild horse looks for a pool to quench his thirst, and then at the thought that I might find a subject to move me, I dare

no longer desire anything. But this repose I desire to obtain appears to me to be the twin brother of ennui. Love is a sorrow, hate is a grief, avarice, ambition, anger, all passions are evil ; why then, O God, is not indifference, which is the absence of every passion, a blessing ? ”

“ Patience ! ” Pierre replied. “ You are only twenty-three. Indifference has come with the strawberries : it will go away with the grapes. ”

Without waiting for the grape harvest, Falconey, invited everywhere, especially sought after by the young, threw himself, in order to shake off his ennui, into a life of dissipation. His boon companions were excellent company, men whom wine, gaming, horses, trips into the country, or masquerades did not suffice unless they were seasoned with cleverness, conversational powers, poetry, and a great deal of music ; that was the reason they could not pass Falconey by.

For the amusement of his friends he often consented to sit down to the piano. Animated by the table, the noise and the laughter, he composed songs which made the guests go into transports of delight. The muse, like a good girl, put her bonnet awry ; but beneath the mask of indifference and folly she concealed a sensibility which was exalted more and more every day. At every moment a woman's image passed in front of Edouard's eyes. In the midst of pleasure he thought of the terrible Olympia of Portici, who had threatened him with confinement in an asylum, and he suddenly fell into a state of black despair. In hours of solitude he saw the other Olympia leaning upon his arm in the woods at Moret, and he felt himself overwhelmed by profound melancholy.

It was when in this latter state of mind that he replied to the letters from Naples—for they came regularly enough

once a month. One morning, after reading a satirical article in which William Caze was the butt of an attack, he wrote a long letter in which he gave his old friend the assurance of never disowning the woman he had loved, as St. Peter denied his Master ; and then, this tribute once paid to past love, he gaily set off with his friend Verdier to search for the unexpected at the mercy of chance and fancy. On his return from this excursion, which had taken him as far as Enghien, Edouard believed he perceived that a life of dissipation was wearing him out without distracting him. His uneasy spirit suddenly took a dislike to the smoke of Paris, the roofs, the mills of Montmartre, the mud, the stones, everything, in fact, which he said could tempt a man to live doubled up with his elbows upon a table and his forehead beneath a lamp. It was the season for taking the waters ; he started for

Germany, spent a month there, and returned in the autumn as pleased to see Paris again as if he had been forced to go away. Capernaum had become Athens once more.

During this period Olympia sent from Naples compositions which the public received with constant favour. In these works, a vague souvenir of happiness appeared at times and gave the master true and naïve tones. Although curiosity played a part in her success, that success was legitimate ; and as it was still increasing Falconey felt extreme pleasure in thinking that under his influence Olympia's talent would have produced the most beautiful and purest of flowers.

In the midst of all this, the news of the return of William Caze to Paris spread. Falconey asked himself what line of conduct he should adopt if Olympia tried to induce him to return

to her circle upon the old friendly footing. His agitation was great ; but after a week, receiving no sign of life from her, he thought she had no desire to see him again. One evening he heard at the Opera a cluster of young men joking at the expense of the prolific master who, it was said, was returning still richer in adventures than in masterpieces. This language wounded Falconey ; it seemed to him that the young man who had spoken was looking at him. Although he had no claim to the title of defender and knight-errant of a person who no longer loved him, he was annoyed at the thought that such jests would not have been ventured upon in the days of his greatness. With a little susceptibility, could he not apply the word adventures to himself? Edouard adopted this elastic way of looking at the question ; he knew the jester at the Opera, and he was writing him a letter

of provocation when Edouard Verdier arrived most opportunely. Verdier unavailingly begged his friend to give up this absurd step; at last, when he had exhausted every means of persuasion :

“ I see quite well,” he added, “ that you look upon the pleasure of fighting for your faithless one as a sweet vengeance. The proceeding, I admit, would be noble and worthy of you ; but, since I must tell you, in doing so you would cut a very ridiculous figure. The lady of your thoughts is provided with a champion. Let me tell you her little Neapolitan doctor is with her.”

“ Palmeriello in Paris !” Edouard cried as he threw his letter in the fire.

“ It is now his duty,” Verdier went on, “ to break lances for her, and you can no longer contest that privilege with him.”

Olympia had, in fact, brought Palmeriello. Persuaded that Falconey would not keep the secret of the adventure at Naples, she wished to prove that her hero was a superior person to the lover she had sacrificed ; she aspired to the complete absolution of the world. It therefore of necessity followed that Falconey must be a monster, an ungrateful wretch and a fool, while Palmeriello possessed a collection of all the perfections. For the demonstration of the first thesis she could count upon the help of the envious ; human folly ought to make the success of the second assured. William Caze opened her drawing-room to a few artists whom she overwhelmed with compliments so as to obtain from them some marks of esteem for her favourite. Using the authority of her name, and with that imperturbable assurance which infatuation supplies, she presented Palmeriello as a great

archæologist, an erudite collector, and the possessor of real treasures in antiques and works of art. He had brought with him a case full of the most precious wonders in the whole of the Italian Peninsula. A specimen of these treasures displayed upon the table in the violet drawing-room excited the admiration of visitors : two Etruscan vases, two ancient cameos, and a stone engraved by Pikler with the author's signature, were on view.

The truth was that Palmeriello knew nothing, that his collection consisted solely of the objects on view, a legacy from his late father, and he had no other desire than to sell them in order to pay the expenses of his trip to France.

Among the new frequenters of the violet drawing-room was a young German pianist, Hans Flocken by name, who was possessed of a talent of incomparable execution, enjoyed a

European reputation, was familiar with the sovereign of his own country, and had the attractiveness of the man of genius, though he was somewhat spoiled by his musical successes ; he was, besides, seductive, expeditious in love, disdainful to men, and irresistible with nervous women when he sat down at the piano. Hans Flocken was too clever and too haughty to pay any attention to Palmeriello. Without wasting time looking at the Etruscan vases, he made love to the mistress of the house. Fortunately for the favourite, this dangerous rival, what with a tour in Germany and a voyage to England, was obliged to leave for London, where he had to spend a month. In this interval Olympia continued to extol her antiquary. It began to be whispered in her circle that the good-for-nothing Falconey had pitilessly abandoned William Caze after having overwhelmed her with disap-

pointment, and had made the choice of a doctor a crime, though the latter was a man of sterling merit to whom he had taken an unreasonable dislike. An incident upset all this scheme.

The news was circulated that Falconey was soon to break the silence which he had kept so long and publish an important work. In fact the muse had descended into his study. She had touched him with the tip of her wing, and he had felt that the only thing he could sing was his own grief. This forgetful and ungrateful fellow, replaced by a man better than himself, metamorphosed himself into a wounded wretch who only displayed half the wound in his heart; youth, suffering and love soon would reply by a cry of enthusiasm to his complaints. A fragment he had given his friends the privilege of hearing left no doubt as to the success in store for this work.

Olympia realized that she would be beaten upon the field of battle she had herself chosen. Instead of obstinately persisting in an untenable comedy, she changed her plan of campaign. With incredible suddenness, from the proud and consoled woman she had been at first, she became a humble, deserted and inconsolable creature. In this new scheme Palmeriello had no part to play nor service to perform. His presence rather became compromising; consequently, from a superior man, which he had been for a fortnight, he became an importunate fellow and a sot. His order to return to Naples was given him in a note crushing in its laconicism. He tried to revolt, but was not heeded; he began to weep, so he was called a coward and told :

“Weep if you like, but go away.”

The moment had come to sacrifice the collection. An expert, called in to

value the curios brought from Italy, declared that the Etruscan vases were imitations well known in Florence and Rome, that the cameos were modern and clumsily cut, and that the graven stone was simply paste which had been moulded upon an original of Pikler. The collection was not worth fifty francs. It only remained for Olympia to share the confusion of Palmeriello: she preferred to treat him as an ignoramus. The poor fellow, in his embarrassment and despair, could neither remain nor journey back to Italy. But he obtained assistance and got out of the business by means which interest no one; I spare the reader the details by virtue of a remarkable expression of the Duchesse de Maille:

“Daughter, do not touch money: it stinks.”

Palmeriello left Paris heaping a thousand curses upon that flourishing

city ; then he disappeared from the stage of the world. A woman's caprice had introduced him to it : a woman's caprice expelled him from it for ever.

After thus clearing the scene of action, William Caze shut her doors and imposed upon herself several days' reclusion. During this period of inactivity the servant told visitors that Madam was ill, that she was stricken with grief and would not see her friends for some time. One morning Falconey, on getting up, found upon his desk a four-paged letter. Olympia did not seek to deny her faults. For the first time this proud soul humiliated and accused itself. Following this confession came a vigorous picture of her remorse. Olympia spoke of committing suicide, of retiring to a nunnery, of cutting off her hair and sending it to the object of her regret ; she finished up by demanding and insisting upon an interview. Falconey consulted Pierre,

who voted energetically against the proposal. After the experience at Naples, to consent to return to this artificial woman was to run the risk of falling into some trap. What could her plan be? From all appearances she wished to resume possession of a heart she had lost by her own fault—perhaps in order to efface the memory of what she herself called her crime, and break a second time in a way more honourable to herself in the eyes of the world, but one as cruel and perhaps more dangerous to Edouard. The man she had betrayed, who had left her in indignation, she wished to display once more to the whole world attached to her car, and say to him afterwards, as she had done to Palmeriello :

“ That is enough ; weep and go away. You can no longer affirm that we parted because I deceived you.”

Pierre's anticipation did not lack probability, Edouard admitted that ; but

there was in the letter a threat which touched him : Olympia's hair was magnificent, and he did not wish the scissors to touch it. He would reproach himself for the whole of his life, he said, for allowing such a sacrilege to be committed when he might have prevented it. To him that reason was decisive : he consented to the interview. A few days later he received a second letter inviting him to dinner at a restaurant with two other persons, and he again accepted. But at the third meeting there was a scene of tears and lamentation, and he returned home with the fixed determination never to expose himself to another such storm. Pierre, thinking that would be the end of it all, rejoiced at this dénouement. He was very much mistaken. The following day Olympia in writing demanded a fourth interview. Edouard replied with a reasonable excuse in kindly fashion.

He was afraid, he said, of love's malady, and he did not want to lose in one day the fruit of six months' efforts and reflections.

Another letter came full of supplications. This time he did not hurry to reply. One evening he was at the piano surrounded by a few friends, when a somewhat bulky packet was handed to him sealed with a seal he well knew. He tremblingly broke the seal, quickly closed up the envelope after half opening it, and placed it in a drawer. His friends, seeing that he was preoccupied, withdrew. Falconey then returned to the mysterious packet. He opened it, examined it closely, plunged his hands into it, raised it gently to his lips and began to weep. It was Olympia's hair.

CHAPTER XV

IT is necessary, to make this story intelligible, to here transcribe some of William Caze's letters. They will show the reader into what a strange state the woman's mind had drifted.

November 183—.

TO M. EDOUARD DE FALCONEY.

You shall listen to me, Edouard. The five minutes which the reading of a letter will occupy, you will not refuse me. I have been untruthful; but ask yourself whether there exists a woman more sincere than I am at this moment.

Do you know that it is horrible to lose the esteem of a person who loved you yesterday? I cared greatly about the other man's esteem after he had

gone. Did I lie to him? Did I take the trouble to pretend for a moment in order to escape his contempt or hatred? Ah, if you saw me lie, it was because I loved you. Do you want me to cure myself? Do me an atrocious unkindness. But, my poor reed, you are always struggling against hatred or goodness. You treat me unkindly and you regret it. You treat me unjustly and you soften. You are a lamb with a lion's anger. Ah! I see very well what has happened: the world steps between us and prevents you from forgetting your hurt. Poor Edouard, if nobody knew it you would forgive me; but there is Verdier, who would say, "Oh! what weakness!"—the man who weeps for a trifle in Mademoiselle X.'s bosom! There are fashionable ladies who are clever, who would say, "It is pitiable!" and you would be unhappy. What is it to forgive the woman who loves you? Ah!

if I had only thought, when you left Naples, that you were suffering as I suffer to-day, I would have cut off my hand ; I would have presented it to you with the words : " This is the hand of an untruthful woman : throw it into the sea."

But to whom am I addressing all this? Is it to you, walls of my room, echoers of sobs and groans? Is it to you, grave and silent portrait of my beloved? Is it to you, horrible skull, full of a poison more deadly than all those which kill the body? Is it to You, deaf and dumb Christ? I shall talk, weep and complain in vain! O God, may Your pity give this worn-out heart forgetfulness and repose, for will You still be angry while I love You so?

To the same person.

Wednesday morning.

What did our host of the Rocher de Cancale tell me yesterday about Hans

Flocken? Have you spoken to him about it? Did you think for a moment that I was going to love Hans Flocken? Ah! my dear fellow, if you could still be jealous—but you are not. You have made a pretence, and that is bad. How can I love Flocken? Must I close my door against him? Why? Would not that be a foolish action?

This is the truth: for a moment I believed, during his first two visits, that he was in love with me or disposed to become so. At the third visit I was convinced that I was foolishly infatuated with useless virtue and that M. Flocken only thought of the Holy Virgin, whom I do not resemble. Good and happy young man! Really, if he is that, I esteem him and love him very dearly. If, on the other hand, it is an affectation on his part, it makes no difference to me. But what necessity was there for me to send him away? How should I pro-

ceed, and what strange reason could I give him for so doing? Besides, I have a fixed idea, a sole and final hope. Poor William, you who were so proud when you were loved! Poor Magdalen without hair, though you are not without tears, cross and death's head! You were forgiven, Magdalen, while I love and am not pardoned! I said that I had a fixed idea. I desire your friendship; I wish to regain your esteem; that is the only thing which sustains me. That is the reason I cannot make up my mind to go away. When I was far away what would you know of me? You suppose that I shall commit a fresh folly. Must I isolate myself, retire to a nunnery? Would not that be in your eyes a romantic idea, the duration of which would seem very doubtful? At the first step outside, would you not think I should meet with temptation and succumb to it? Besides, who knows whether that would

not happen? The cloister, asceticism and mortification exalt the senses, and why should I expose mine to dangerous solitude? Ah! if he came to visit me in my cell! If he came there to kiss me every day! No, for if he came there it would still be with mistrust. I must put between us a time and facts which can be called "Yesterday." I will prove to you that I can love, suffer and endure.

But alas! you are asleep, for it is eleven o'clock in the morning, and you will have turned night into day. Edouard, I desire your friendship. Can you not believe in anything good where I am concerned? I will come and reclaim this friendship later, for to-day there would be storms which would do you harm.

To the same person.

Thursday morning.

O God! I prefer blows to nothing at all. Nothing! that is the most frightful

word in the world, and that is my expiation. Fasting and blows of the whip are the things invented by penitents. They are not imposed upon those who love to dwell a few paces from the object of their love, to keep quiet, laugh and eat. It will be a long time before I have the courage not to be jealous : the woman you spoke well of the day we dined at a restaurant, I would have liked to have brought her down below the vilest of creatures. Why?—it is as ugly an idea as it is absurd. Lord God, do not allow me to become besotted and perish. Passion is a severe, but divine, gift. Love's sufferings ought to ennoble, not degrade. It is here, my pride, that you are a holy and a worthy thing. May this woman console him ; may she teach him to believe. As for myself, I have only learnt to deny. Edouard, you shall see that my soul is not corrupt. I will spread against myself a terrible accusa-

tion. Saints in heaven, you have sinned ; you have suffered !

To the same person.

Saturday midnight.

I have just returned home from the "Italiens." I am terribly bored. I have had a sweetly sorrowful day. Caliban read me something of M. de Maistre's. I have only retained three lines of it : " In certain provinces in India people often register a vow to voluntarily kill themselves if they obtain this or that favour from the idols of the place. Those who make this vow hurl themselves from the top of a rock." O God ! if you would but grant me one more day of that happiness which You have taken from me, I would carry out that vow.

Decidedly music only does me harm, and a theatre is so stupid ; how silly those tranquil, indifferent or pleased

faces look ! Here am I in a sailor-hat, alone in despair at entering in the midst of these dark men. I have my hair cut short, my eyes black-ringed, my cheeks hollow, and above are all these white women, well-dressed and happy blondes !

I cannot endure all that for nothing ! I am thirty years old ; I am still beautiful—at least I should be if I left off weeping. I have around me men who boldly offered me their support. Ah ! if I could only apply myself to loving some one ! O God ! give me back the ferocious vigour I possessed in Naples ! Return me that keen love of life which seized me like a spasm of rage in the midst of the blackest despair !

This morning I was in Rubens's studio. He told me that if you had liked, you could have been a great painter. I quite believe it ! He wishes to copy drawings from your album. While showing me the faces of Spanish

women, he asked me where I stood : “ I am not yet cured,” I told him. I told him of my sorrows. What can I talk about except that ? He gave me good advice : that was, not to be brave. “ Let yourself go,” he told me ; “ banish your pride ; do not be Roman. When such a thing happens to me I give way to my despair. It gnaws, pounces upon me, and kills me ; and then when it is satisfied it wearies and leaves me.” And mine increases every day ! I would endure every punishment to be still loved by you. That love would lead me to the end of the world. Ah ! I know it now : one cannot love two persons at the same time. Because it has happened to me, you say to yourself : “ What she has done once she will do again.” Fool ! you should say just the opposite. I needed a strong arm to support me. You were too suave and too subtle, my dear perfume, not to evaporate when my senses

breathed you. The beautiful shrubs of India and China bend upon their weak stems and bow to the slightest breeze. Not from them would one take beams for building. One bathes in their nectar, becomes infatuated with their scent, falls asleep and dies!

To the same person.

Monday evening.

My death-knell is about to sound. Every day as it passes strikes a blow, and in four days the last stroke will put in motion the vital air around me. Then a tomb will open, into which my youth and love will for ever descend; and what shall I be afterwards? Sad spectre! on what shores will you wander and lament? Inimense strands! endless winters! It requires more courage to cross the threshold of the passions and enter into the calm of despair than to swallow hemlock.

Why did You awaken me, O God, when I lay down with resignation upon an icy couch? Why did You make the phantoms of my nights of love pass before me? Angel of death, fatal love—O destiny, in the face of a bland and delicate child—oh! how I love you still! What is this fire which devours my entrails? It seems as if a volcano is erupting within me and I am about to burst into flame like a crater. O God, have pity upon the creature who is suffering so! Why do others die? May I not succumb beneath the weight of my sorrow?

Why is this image fixed in my brain? After all the revolts of vanity, all the counsels of reason, all human discourse, why does a divine profile outline itself between my eyes and the wall? Why are those who talk to me enveloped in a mist, and why do I see upon their shoulders a head that is not their own?

Does the being we love contain a demon to torture us? What fever have you passed into my veins, spirit of celestial vengeance? What harm have I done to the angels of heaven for them to descend upon me and inflict upon me the chastisement of a lioness's love? Is my blood changed into fire? Why have I, as at the approach of death, a fiercer fire than men? What fury is in arms against me and is pushing me with its foot into the coffin? Shall I become mad? Shall I awaken the guests of the houses by my cries? Oh! I must die!

CHAPTER XVI

THESE letters could not please a man who esteemed naturalness above everything. The artist was roused into revolt by the expressions in bad taste and disagreeable pictures, such as the "lying hand cast into the sea," and the remark upon the effects of mortification ; the man of the world made a grimace at the idea of the "sailor-hat" mixing in the crowd in the stalls at the theatre. Two words vibrating with real emotion would certainly have touched Edouard's heart ; but he did not find them. The souvenir of the past, his own fatal experience told him that her pride was still there disguised beneath the mask of humility. The last letter astonished Falconey by its power of language, which resembled passion ; but the

“lioness’s love” inspired him rather with fright than with interest. To get rid of the sorrowful impression caused by this letter, he went to sup with his friend Verdier.

The next morning, about two o’clock, Pierre was sleeping soundly, when he was awakened by a woman’s voice calling him from the courtyard. He jumped out of bed and opened his window.

“It is I—William,” the voice said ;
“I must speak to you !”

Pierre lit a candle, hastened to dress himself, and walked down a long corridor to find Olympia. He discovered her in tears sitting upon a step ; he raised her, brought her in, and as it was a cold night wished to light a fire, but she stopped him, crying :

“Leave that alone. It is simply a question of warmth or cold ! Listen to me, and pay attention to what I am

saying. It will soon be daybreak, will it not? Ah well! I shall not see it if you refuse me the service I am about to ask you. I am a hundred times more guilty than you think. The crime I have committed has no name, and when I have told it to you——”

“It is useless,” Pierre interrupted; “I know all that.”

“You know nothing,” Olympia retorted, raising her voice. “Let me appease my conscience.”

With incredible volubility she related the circumstances of her fault, and all that had taken place in Naples in the sick-room; then as she finished her confession, she lay full length upon the floor, with arms extended, face to the ground. There was a moment of silence as painful to the listener as to herself.

“After such a confession,” Pierre said, “it is impossible to doubt the grandeur of your despair. But refrain from repeating

all this to Falconey. You would cause him great pain."

"I make no pretence of excusing myself," Olympia replied. "Only let him pardon me, and grant me his friendship."

"His friendship! That is always yours. If he does not display it in the way you desire, it is because he is still struggling with a remnant of his love."

"Do you think so?" Olympia cried, getting up.

"I am sure of it."

"But if my presence is a subject of fear to him, if he desires to cure himself, must I, for that reason, die? Let him suffer a few days more and not kill me. I wish to see him again."

"I will tell him that, and he will see you."

"No parley!" Olympia went on; "I will not wait. I want to see him at this very instant. You know a way

of getting to him without waking the whole house. Lead me to him. Let us go !”

Pierre did not object. He took the light and descended the staircase followed by Olympia. The art of the locksmith had not invented in those days portable keys ; in order not to load his pocket with an inconvenient weight Edouard had arranged with his servant a hiding-place where the key of his rooms was placed. Pierre looked in the hiding-place ; the key was there. Falconey was not at home. Olympia insisted upon entering. She took off her hat, and settled herself upon a couch, thanked Pierre for his kindness, and begged him to go away, saying that she had no further need of his services and that she would wait for Edouard till daylight if necessary ; but Pierre guessed that she was preparing a theatrical effect, and wished to remain alone in order to main-

tain herself in her condition of exaltation. French politeness furnished him with a simple and convenient way of frustrating this dangerous project. Could he withdraw without at least lighting the fire? The cursed wood would not kindle. While blowing the fire, Pierre questioned Olympia upon her works and travels. At first she let him talk, and maintained a stern silence ; but soon, urged on by manners and habit, she consented to answer. The conversation developed, the tone by degrees dropped. For a few minutes the storm muttered angrily ; then it departed, and the fever was calmed. In the midst of all this, Falconey arrived. He had won a few gold pieces at bouillette, and returned home very pleased with the way he had spent the evening.

“ Oh ! ” he said gaily, “ you anticipate the dawn considerably, Sir Agamemnon. It seems we are not to chat about trifles.

But perhaps you are engaged in an affair of honour?"

"No," Olympia answered, "an affair of the heart, always the same."

"And while waiting for you," Pierre said, "we were talking of the Italians' superiority in comic music."

"Very well!" Edouard went on, "that is a subject of conversation which does not tend to melancholy. It is very kind of you, in order to come and see me, to have got rid of your Sunday's humour."

The theatrical stroke had failed. Pierre took his light and retired to his own rooms; but instead of going to bed he opened his window, from which he could see Edouard's window, and remained there on the watch. From his look-out he followed the pantomime of the conference. The woman's shadow passed and repassed the window with increasing frequency. Soon the shadow

raised arms in the air, and then subsided. Probably Olympia had thrown herself upon the floor at the end of a tirade. Edouard's shadow appeared in its turn. It moved more slowly than the other; but sometimes the arm made an animated and abrupt gesture which combined reproach and anger. Without a doubt the words which this gesture accompanied had a decisive effect, for the shadow stopped. The sound of a door came from the staircase. Pierre heard in the courtyard the light steps of a woman, some one tapped softly at the window of the lodge, and a voice distorted by emotion asked to be let out. Without waiting to see the door opened, he hurried down-stairs to his friend's room.

"Ah well!" he said, "so you won the victory?"

"Yes," Edouard replied, "but this victory will cost me dear. I shall be troubled for a long while. What would

be the use of denying it? This woman's repentance is sincere. I had never seen her more beautiful or more touching. She was neither the demon of Naples nor the angel of Moret. She was a different and sublime creature, illuminated by the divine fire of passion, all the more charming as she did not try to please, only to persuade. And her shorn locks! Ah! old friend, is it possible that I am the cause of that mutilation! But of what are we thinking? chatterer that I am! I am making phrases, and all this time she is traversing by herself the deserted streets on a terrible night, without an arm to support or defend her!"

Edouard picked up his hat and rushed out. He crossed the courtyard, banged at the porter's window with his fist, and slammed the door with a noise like thunder. Pierre was preparing to retire to his rooms once more

when he heard a sigh behind him ; a woman was standing at the door ; she was weeping, and hiding her face in her handkerchief.

“ You here, William ! ” he cried. “ How is it possible ? ”

“ I tapped and called in vain,” Olympia replied. “ The door was not opened for me. You must help me.”

“ But Edouard has gone out with the intention of seeing you home. How was it you did not meet him ? ”

“ I went up to your studio ; not finding you there I came back here, and without doubt Edouard went out during that time.”

“ Ah well ! ” Pierre went on, “ I will give you my arm. I am at your orders.”

“ A moment, I entreat you ! ” Olympia said, as she leant against the frame of the door, “ my strength is failing me ; give me a few minutes to rest. I will not

enter this room ; I have promised never to return to it. Let me cast a last glance at it and fix in my memory its furniture, engravings, and that couch upon which I shall never again sit."

Olympia wept such warm tears ; she gave herself up to her grief so thoroughly that Pierre was moved by it to the depths of his soul.

"Calm yourself," he said. "You will not in that way recover your strength. Forget all these objects, the witnesses of a sad quarrel ; think rather of those beautiful woods at Moret, to which no painful memory is attached. Do not stand against the wall. As you will not come in, rest in the drawing-room upon the couch. Come, poor William, take courage. Love passes ; regrets and sorrows will pass in their turn."

Olympia offered no resistance to Pierre's advice ; she consented to recline upon the drawing-room couch. "Leave

me alone," she said afterwards ; " my tears will not stop flowing as long as you talk to me. Take away that light ; the darkness and silence will do me good. Must I not recover from my state of collapse before I can go ! "

Pierre returned to the other room with the light, and paced up and down it, muttering in low tones :

" What a night ! Good God ! what a night ! Yet if we were at the end of our troubles ! "

To meditate more attentively upon the dangers he feared, Pierre sat down in an easy-chair, with his elbows upon the table and his head in his hands. Soothed by fatigue, the quiet of the night, the late hour, and the monotonous ticking of the clock, he suddenly went to sleep and dreamed that he was travelling in a coach. A hand which struck him roughly upon the shoulder awakened him with a start.

“Come with me,” Edouard said to him ; “come along, you wretch ! While you are sleeping here she is perhaps dying. I have not been able to find her. The old servant has not seen her. Ah ! old friend, if she were killed !”

“Thank God !” Pierre replied, rubbing his eyes, “nobody is dead.”

“What do you know about it ?” Edouard cried. “Think : the river is below there ! That is the easiest death of all, but it is also the most hideous and the coldest !”

“If you will only listen to me——” Pierre interposed.

“No, I will not listen to you. You are always wanting to be listened to ! Will all the reasons in the world prevent a woman from being drowned if she falls into the water ? I will not go alone to search for her on the river bank. Come with me.”

“We will not go and search for any

one on the river bank," Pierre said. "William is there lying upon the couch. You passed her without seeing her."

Edouard rushed into the drawing-room. He fell down on his knees in front of Olympia, took her head in his hands and kissed her with tears in his eyes.

"I required this experience," he said, "to teach me how dear you are to me. I have never ceased to love you. Is not forgiveness invented for those who have committed faults? Who could prevent me from forgiving you? No, I do not return your love; you had it again, you will have it as long as I live."

Pierre did not hear Olympia's reply. He had picked up his light and was ascending the stairs, repeating :

"What a night! Good God! what a night! To wish to divine all these

games of fate, and to pretend to put an obstacle in the way, would have been a waste of effort. An invisible hand directs us. Let us bow our heads and say, like the Turks, 'God is great!'"

CHAPTER XVII

FOR this fresh recrudescence in Edouard's love to have any chance of lasting, forgiveness would not suffice ; oblivion would have been required, and that does not depend upon us. Painful memories, distrust and jealousy were not long in rising up between the reconciled lovers. Since the tour in Italy, Edouard held in his hand the thread which led by the path of evil to Olympia's heart, but he controlled himself with rare wisdom. The generous mind which up to that time had refused to believe in evil thoughts, now saw them arise and seized upon them with avidity. It did not miss one, and took a bitter delight in parading its discovery. Edouard called it transfixing an insect with a pin and adding it to his collection.

The cruelest of reproaches, those formulated by allusion and irony, the most powerful solvent, were among the number.

As a precautionary measure, Edouard had desired her door to be shut against the frequenters of the house. Hans Flocken, after leaving his card, wrote a note asking for an interview. Olympia affirmed that she would not reply to this note; but Falconey read in her eyes her wish to reply, and he in fact became certain she had done so. This was the cause of their first quarrel. Another friend, who had a cause for sorrow, wrote to William Caze to ask for consolation. This time the reply was communicated to Edouard. In it he came across the words "chastity" and "holy friendship," of which Olympia loved to make frequent use.

"My dear," he said to her, "you talk so much about chastity that it is be-

coming quite indecent. Your friendship is no more holy than that of other persons. Rid yourself of those great words."

"My dear," Olympia replied in the same tone, "be glad that I console my friends after my own fashion. You see they are well enough pleased by it, for they return for more."

"I know," Edouard went on, "that in your little circle you are the sister in their cups of all the suffering hearts; but to me it is only make-believe; for after tasting, I am sure that there is arsenic in your decoction."

"I will not be spoken to like that by any one," Olympia cried, rapping the table. "I will teach you to respect William Caze."

"How will you do it, chaste gentleman?" Edouard said, folding his arms.

"You are going to see—at this very moment."

Olympia took from a whatnot her

famous dagger of the Rocher de Cancale, drew it from its sheath and advanced with outstretched arm. But Falconey blew out the two candles, and cried out in the darkness: "It is you who are going to die. Be quick and say your prayers."

Then the redoubtable William Caze begged for forgiveness on bended knees. This tragi-comic episode was the last of the recrudescence. Love could not survive confidence and esteem. Once a separation was arranged, Falconey resumed his sweet and benevolent humour. Olympia on two successive days followed him to his rooms; she found him sympathetic, but resolute in his determination to bring the affair to an end.

The latter of these two interviews was marked by an incident that the most unsuspecting man on earth could only have interpreted in one way. Falconey

that evening was dining in town. His friends were reckoning upon his presence. Nothing in the world, he said, could turn him from the performance of a sacred duty ; he offered Olympia his arm to escort her as far as the top of the Rue Mazarine. On the way, William brought into play her most tender seductiveness to persuade Edouard to share her modest dinner. On chance, without daring to think he would accept her invitation, she had ordered her old servant to prepare the dishes he liked best. Falconey, touched by this gracious forethought, suddenly changed his mind, with that marvellous versatility which he applied to the little things of life, and which he called the pleasure of not going where one is going.

“Very well, so much the worse !” he said ; “I yield for the sake of the opportunity and the tasty dishes. I will eat your little dinner.”

Olympia thanked Edouard from the bottom of her heart ; but as she reached the door, she stopped in an embarrassed fashion.

“ I hope,” she said hesitatingly—“ I hope you will not be very much annoyed at meeting . . . you were so hard upon me . . . I was far from anticipating——”

“ What is it ? ” Falconey asked.

“ We shall not be alone,” Olympia went on. “ I have invited another person to dinner, and I fear that the choice of the guest——”

“ Ah ! who is it ? ”

“ Hans Flocken.”

The passers-by turned round at the sound of an enormous roar of laughter. Edouard called a cab, wished Olympia good-bye, jumped into the vehicle and drove off, still laughing.

The same evening, at dessert at a jolly dinner, the guests amused themselves by proposing burlesque toasts.

It goes without saying that the wildest nonsense obtained the loudest applause. When it came to Edouard's turn he lifted his glass as he said :

“I drink to Holofernes, so foully put to death by Judith.”

CHAPTER XVIII

TWENTY years later, on a dreary November evening, Falconey, ill and in bed, saw pass before his eyes fantastic pictures created by insomnia and fever. The doctor was not alarmed by these visions, and said that the great master could neither in good health nor in sickness be like other people. To escape from these unpleasant apparitions, Edouard required company. Pierre, who was reading the newspaper to him, chanced upon the name of William Caze in it.

"That is the woman who poisoned me," Edouard said. "I am like those persons who once dined with the Borgias or Medicis and never recovered."

"You must admit," Pierre replied, "that it was slow poison in your case,

and with reasonable care it rests with yourself to effect a cure."

"Ah! do you not see," Edouard went on, "that this poison takes away one's reason, and even the desire to live? What can care do for that? You are grand as father and mother, yet you do not know better than that! Learn that I cannot live without loving, and love does not now enter into my heart unless accompanied by incredulity and jealousy, while the whole cortège of suspicions assail it. With the distributive injustice which distinguishes love, I am taken, in spite of myself, by the best and most pleasant phases of the malady which the demon of Naples inflicted upon me. If I was the only one this woman had put in that state, I could be quoted as an exception, a rare case; but look where are to-day those whom she has loved. All of them have left her hands more or less wounded,

disfigured and crippled for life. They would make a procession of phantoms. One of them died of a chest complaint. That one appeared to have escaped before receiving the fatal blow. It was indeed a pity! She hastened to dispel the illusion at the last moment, so that he might die in despair. I would forgive her for quickly becoming infatuated, for getting rid of her infatuation more quickly still, for forgetting last night's idol; but to disown the man one has loved, to destroy him, to morally torment him! A public punishment ought to be invented for crimes of that sort."

"Let us not exaggerate," Pierre said; "let us examine things philosophically and impartially. There are, to my way of thinking, extenuating circumstances."

"Ah!" Falconey cried, "I am curious to hear them."

"If it were closely scrutinized," Pierre resumed, "the woman's excuse would

perhaps be found in the faculties and talent of the master. William Caze, obliged by her art to make the passions speak, experiences an ardent longing to know them, to listen to their language, to see them at short range, to observe in the hearts of others all those she is incapable of feeling herself. From that comes her intemperate appetite for complications, adventures, change, interrupted, resumed and abandoned love affairs. Calmness and happiness, however sweet they may be, after a certain time teach nothing; that is the reason of her desire to break, to pass on to something else. The woman would still most willingly love; but the composer becomes impatient and says: 'Enough of love; we know that by heart. Let us occupy ourselves with a little jealousy, despair, deception and infidelity.' That is the reason she deceives and becomes unfaithful!"

“Marvellous!” Edouard cried. “In short, the object beloved plays the agreeable part of the bat whose eyes and ears Spallanzani stopped up with hot sealing-wax to see if it still knew how to fly and take care of itself! My sacrifice by this little doctor, who certainly could pass in originality, was simply a way of experimenting in vivisection, just as much as was M. Magendie’s taking away on the end of his scalpel the spinal cord of a dog?”

“Perhaps so,” Pierre replied.

“But,” Edouard went on, “how do you explain the fury with which William rends the reputation of those whom she has loved; when it is over, what advantage does she gain by saying that one was a fool, another an imbecile, this one a raving lunatic, and that one a man lacking in delicacy?”

“Perhaps it is because,” Pierre answered, “the woman has too much pride

to content herself with extenuating circumstances which plead in the artist's favour. She does not desire to admit any weakness or error, and pretends to justify herself upon all points. Now, for her to be right, the other must be wrong! Then they are wretches."

"At least," Edouard resumed, "I must do her this justice: I have never heard it mentioned that she has spoken ill of me."

"I believe it; she does not mention the subject at all; but perhaps you will lose nothing by having to wait for her condemnation."

"What reproach could she then heap upon me?"

"I do not know; but if she breaks the silence, without a doubt it will be to rend you as she has done the others. She will not fail to give you at twenty the ideas and character of a man of forty; she will borrow from your virile

age the material to compose a very unkind picture of a youthful admirer. Because she has made you suspicious, she will say you were so before knowing her. She it was who stole from you your confidence and heart's faith, and she will say your heart was withered. Because, in your moments of horror and suffering, you sometimes applied narcotics to your hurt, she will say that you were already wounded and that you loved narcotics. These lies, by wilful anachronism, are the most perfidious, the most difficult to unmask."

"Then I am lost!" Edouard cried, his imagination being only too ready to create monsters. "I am lost. I shall die before her and be calumniated."

"No," Pierre resumed. "Justice and truth only demand to be produced in broad daylight. It is sufficient to aid them a little. Let us prepare your defence."

Falconey had brought to his bed old drawers which he had not turned over for many years.

In one of these drawers he found several letters from William Caze.

“What does that signify?” he said. “I thought I had returned all her correspondence.”

“Oh!” Pierre cried, “that is providential. Such good luck would never happen to a tidy man. How you ought to rejoice at never having kept an account of your money or of your handkerchiefs!”

To these precious letters, in which William Caze confessed all her faults, Falconey added two pages of notes written in Naples before and after his illness. Pierre did not doubt that one day these two autographs would have great biographical importance; Edouard afterwards dictated to him the narrative related here. A record of it all was

kept. Pierre put the documents under his arm, and seeing that his friend was tranquil and reassured, wished him good-night.

“One word more!” Falconey said. “I am not like that woman. I do not wish to disown the woman I have loved without a serious reason ; do not forget that it is solely a question of my own defence. Perhaps she will have the same scruples, the same feeling as myself.”

“Let us hope so,” Pierre answered.

“So only make use of all that if it is absolutely necessary as a last extremity.”

“A last extremity,” Pierre repeated.

“But if she has the audacity to lie to God and men so far as to say that I was ungrateful, a fool and an evildoer, when it was the woman herself who betrayed me, took away my reason and poisoned my heart, then let it happen as the

Commander's statue at Don Juan's supper."

"I shall appear."

"Stamp upon the lie and crush it."

"I will walk upon it and crush it."

"The order I give you is an easy one; to carry it out, all that is required of you is to love me and be an honourable man."

Pierre stretched out his arm above the sick man's bed and answered :

"I will carry it out ; I swear I will !"

I have heard it said that Pierre kept his word.

THE END

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 037 474 4

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

Return this material to the library
from which it was borrowed.

REC'D LD-61KJ

LD
SEP 20 1999
RECEIVED

OCT 18 1999

JAN 07 2000

SELEMS LIBRARY

E

SEL

Univer
Sou
Li



S
A